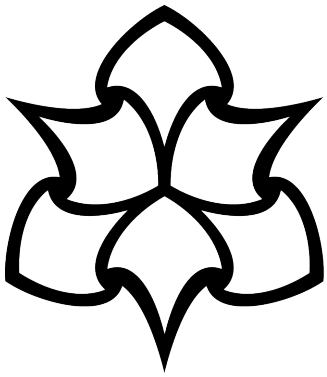

Canned Chance - The commodification of aleatory art practice.

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Abstract:

My practice involves re-imagining aleatory art systems and practices to create products that push the user into a direct relationship with chance. Initial research revealed that modernist aleatory practices have largely been recuperated into the canon of contemporary art techniques. It was my intention to re- invigorate these practices by re-imagining them in a new context outside of art practice: to change perspectives, 'reality tunnels' and to transcend culture and social conditioning.

There are differences between work that has been made using chance in the creative process, and work that pushes the artist or viewer into chance encounters and situations and exploring the differences between them has been an important part of this project. The resulting works situate the user within the chance process, and in effect, make them the subject of their own experimentation and practice.

My insights and discoveries develop out of a range of experimental artistic works that critically examine the re-imagining and commodification of chance processes. This thesis documents the development of each work in a series of chapters which also explain the research and developmental processes, in addition to setting the works in a theoretical and contextual framework. The project defines a new category of aleatory practice which I call *aleatorickal* and is also an interdisciplinary study of aleatory practice across the artistic disciplines of conceptual art, visual art, music and writing.

The primary methodology is practice-based; using the commercial techniques of graphic design, creative computer software, photography, copywriting and model making. These works are ephemeral and throw-away, but ontologically, they offer access to chance which enables the discovery of insights and the opportunity to make connections with other realities. I also argue that if something is useful to us then it can be commodified and made available to a wider audience. Therefore, the consumer retail market is the ideal place to present my work - this is my art gallery.

Acknowledgements:

This PhD acknowledges the excellent support and assistance of my supervisors: Dr Jane Turner, Dr Adam Fairhall and Dr Myna Trustram. I would also like to thank the University of Wolverhampton for their assistance, and those colleagues, family and friends who have encouraged me on my PhD journey. I'd also like to thank Julie for her encouragement and support, and George Cockcroft (Luke Rhinehart) for reading early chapters and for his generous comments and suggestions.

Contents:

Introduction:

The primary aim of this practice-as-research PhD project is to explore the appropriation and commodification of aleatory processes, to discover how they can be used to make changes in lives outside artistic practice. The result of my praxis has been a range of consumer products that can be used to facilitate various relationships with chance. Duchamp's 1914 term 'Canned chance' (*Hasard en conserve*), which he used to describe the 'fabrication of accidents' (Moulderings, 2010: 2) has been used in the title of this thesis. The term lends itself well to my aleatory consumer products; literally encapsulated or 'canned' methods for engaging with chance.

The term aleatory comes from the Latin for a dice game, alea, and gambler, aleator. [1] The use of the word aleatoric or aleatory to describe the use of chance in the creation of an artwork is accredited to the Belgian/German physicist and founder of the WDR Electronic Music Studio, Werner Meyer-Eppler in 1957.

The thesis is divided into two parts:

The first part sets out four chapters that explain the critical framework for the project, discussing the key research, the people and ideas that have informed thinking, insights and practical work. The second part, made up of seven chapters in three sections, sets out different aspects of the commodification of aleatory processes which have been explored through practical experimentation. Each of these chapters includes a literature review covering the research and areas of interest that have been relevant to each aspect of the project.

An important catalyst for this project has been eastern spiritual practices, in particular, Buddhism and Taoism. A primarily western understanding of, and appropriation of these practices underpinned much of the original aleatory processes presented here. This will be introduced and discussed as it becomes relevant to the development of the different works in Part Two. Contemporary global culture can no longer simply be labelled as eastern or

[1] Merriam-Webster dictionary ,2016. It was first used in English in the late 17th century as a term for anything with an uncertain outcome like the roll of a dice.

western, so I use the term, 'contemporary secular culture' when referring to the modern cultural sensibility that is relevant to the project. Throughout the thesis I have included personal thoughts from my notebooks that contribute to the narrative. These are delineated using italics.

In 2013 I discovered the novel, *The Dice Man*, by Luke Rhinehart. Reading this book had a profound effect on me. As a person who likes to be in control of myself, the idea of giving this up to the random throw of a dice both horrified and intrigued me. This was the starting point which led to this PhD project.

Rhinehart's novel is a 'thought experiment' on what it might be like to give up one's life to chance decision making. In Rhinehart's later *book of the die* (2000) he developed this philosophy of 'dice living' and explained that *this* book was intended as a provocation; a challenge '…to force us to reconsider the ideas we usually live by' (Rhinehart, xii: 2000).

I began to speculate that it might be possible to utilise chance to make useful changes in our lives - that Rhinehart's philosophy and ideas could be re-imagined and developed through other chance processes and methods. Another starting point, was conceptual artist, Joseph Kosuth's ideas on how art of the past can inform new art. His 1969 essay, *Art after Philosophy*, set out his proposition that artworks from the past are the remnants of previous philosophical experiments into the nature of art and his suggestion that:

> Art 'lives' through influencing other art, not by existing as the physical residue of an artist's ideas. The reason that different artists from the past are 'brought alive' again is because some aspect of their work becomes 'usable' by living artists. (1969: 19)

Initial research revealed that these modernist aleatory practices seemed to have largely been recuperated into the canon of contemporary art practices and techniques. There have been sporadic re-emergences of chance primers in the intervening years; Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies*[2] mentioned in the *REM* song *Diminished* (1998) and the *Radiohead* album, *Kid A* (2000) in which Thom Yorke's lyrics were created using cut-ups, are two examples. More recently (2010), the writer, Austin Kleon's *Newspaper Blackout* poems have given new life to Burroughs' and Gysin's textual cut-ups (see chapter 6). Aleatory practices

[2]A set of interventionist cards devised by Peter Schmidt and Brian Eno in the 1970s.

were due a revival and I wanted to explore whether they could be re-invigorated or 'brought alive' as Kosuth had suggested; but instead, appropriated[3] and re-invented for use outside of artistic practice.

I wanted to examine how, and to what extent, aleatory processes could be re-introduced; and used in a transformative sense, *outside* of artistic practice; how these aleatory processes could be brought to life again, in a new way. One that would re-imagine these art primers and philosophical ideas for use in personal lives as Rhinehart had advocated in his book.

I intend to argue that by connecting with chance, personal realities can be examined and changed. Just like the artists who developed these aleatory techniques, chance can be used to facilitate an escape from habit and repetition, but, outside of artistic practice they can be used to alter personal habits and to transcend culture and social conditioning. I suggest that giving oneself up to the workings of chance can have a transformative effect on individual outlooks and how lives are lived. That entering into a relationship with chance can turn the user into the subject of the artistic process. My practice-based research explores these possibilities within aleatory philosophies, art processes and systems, and critiques what can happen when they are applied to personal realities.

The artefacts that have evolved from my praxis are an attempt to commodify controlled or mediated access to chance. They are tools to facilitate insight and change. Each one enables access to an aspect of chance and the user can pick and choose the ones that are right for them at any given point.

My background is in commercial art and design and I wanted to use this approach to create the works that would express my ideas. When I started the project, I had no clear idea how I

[3] I use the term appropriation in the creative sense, the adapting and evolving of previous ideas into something new.

was going to do this. One obvious direction was to use computers and digital technology, as these seem the perfect tools for working with the random. There are many apps and websites that present chance products, a good example being the number of on-line *Oblique Strategies* engines or cut-up text generators. There are also 'serendipity engines' that enable the user to create random journeys, or even one that helps the user to get lost.[4] I decided that I didn't want to take this route with my enquiry. Instead, I came back to the aims and objectives for the project; to find out if and how aleatory techniques could be re-imagined and used to make useful life changes. To this end, I decided that I would make analogue artefacts that would be made available through retail and consumer outlets. I wanted to create tangible objects, not digital. 'Physical' products that could be bought and sold. I wanted to create an 'exchange' between the work and the viewer or consumer of the work. The reasons for this will be discussed in chapter 4.

Commercial art normally sits outside of the conventional art world, despite artists like Warhol, Lichtenstein, Macunias and Koons, and others who have appropriated commercial techniques and imagery in their work. The boundaries between high art and low art are no longer as rigid; Postmodern culture breaks down distinctions of high and low art, for example, Andy Warhol's mixing of high and low cultural markers; *Coca-Cola*, Marilyn Monroe and Mona Lisa. I wanted to explore how far I could push these boundaries; for example, the artists mentioned above created work that had a commercial aesthetic and I wanted to try to make actual commercial work; form *and function.* To this end, my praxis experiments with chance systems and techniques which are presented as commercial products. In effect, the buying and selling of access to chance.

I have created a brand name for these chance products. The name *Samsara* was chosen because I identified a link between my project and the Buddhist concept of karma. *Samsara* refers to the wheel of unenlightened existence. The paradox of combining Buddhist philosophy with consumerism and commodification is explored in several of my

[4] See www.oblicard.com, A Burroughs style 'Cut-up' generator at www.languageisavirus.com and information on *Getlostbot*- www.ben.kirman.org/2011/11/getlostbot-serendipity-generator.

experimental works which are discussed in Part Two of this thesis. The name *Samsara* therefore was an expedient brand name for the commercial products that developed out of this experimental practice. In April 2017 I registered the web domain name, *Samsara.org.uk* and have used it as part of the different works that I have created. I am also aware that through this project I am playing with, and appropriating from, eastern philosophical and spiritual ideas and that this is provocative. This is intentional. Capitalism and consumer culture have reduced everything to endless choices, fads, convenience and consumption. Mike Featherstone talks of consumer culture ransacking 'various traditions and cultures in order to produce new symbolic goods' (1994, 19). My practice also 'ransacks' this culture, but with irony and satire. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The creators of commercial products are usually anonymous; it is the brand that becomes the 'personality' of the product. I see the artefacts that I have created for this project as art-works, but ones that utilise the commercial design and production techniques in their realisation. Even so, it is my intention, as the artist who created these artefacts, to remain anonymous. The reasons for this will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

There are many different methods of aleatory art practice, and variations in the practice too. Aleatory practices set up parameters for creating artworks, but there is also a type of practice that places the performer or the viewer/audience into a *direct union* with chance. It was defining this type of practice that was to prove useful to my project and my overall argument. Although this discovery was a by-product of my early investigations into these processes, it has helped me to situate my praxis within this type of aleatory practice. This was an important discovery and will be further discussed in Chapter 1.

In his book, *The Radical Use of Chance in 20th Century Art* (2010), Denis Lejeune points out that 'chance has been an overwhelmingly scientific concern, despite the history of 20th century art displaying numerous significant works of art based either partly or organically on chance' (2010: 14). He also states that at the time of writing he was surprised that, despite this being an age of inter and trans-disciplinary practice '…there are no studies exploring

chance *across* the artistic fields, in a comparative perspective, (2010: 14). Even though Lejeune wrote this in 2010, to date, I have also been unable to find a study like this. I intend that this project will add a much-needed contribution, both in making links between aleatory practices across artistic disciplines and in suggesting new possibilities outside of artistic practice too.

I found another inspiration in the notions of participation and transformation through art practice. In his book *Art as Experience*, the philosopher John Dewey maintained that experience is a by-product of the 'organic self' interacting with the world. Dewey (1934, reprinted 2005) believed that what is important in a work of art is not so much the final 'expressive object' but the total process; the development of an 'experience' that affects your life in some way. This methodology was useful, in that it set the parameters of what I wanted to do with my own praxis; that I wanted my works to create a useful experience for the consumer. Relational art was also a driver of the project, and particularly Bourriaud's (2006) suggestion that artists should be facilitators rather than makers – art as an exchange or 'encounter' between artist and viewer. The notion that 'a work can function as a relational device in which there is a degree of randomness (…) a machine for provoking and managing individual or collective encounters' (Bourriaud, 2006: 163). These ideas will be discussed in relation to the individual artworks as they are discussed in Part Two. I found the Fluxus artists' rejection of craft valuable too, and this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Each chapter in the Critical Framework will set out the arguments that define my project. In the first chapter I will make the case for varying distinctions between types of aleatory art practice. I dispute that to use the single term, aleatoric, for all work that engages with chance, as coined by Meyer-Eppler in 1957, does not fully explain the varying types of this practice. I will argue that there is a particular type of aleatory practice that places the artist/audience into a direct union with chance.

Chapter 2 will draw on my research into Bergson, Huxley, Leary and Wilson and also contemporary ideas in perception and neuroscience, to argue that humans live in self-constructed realities, that share similarities with those of others, but are mainly personal and subjective. I will suggest that these realities are not fixed and that they can be manipulated and changed. I will also discuss contemporary views on decision making; that decisions are emotional responses to one's perceived reality at a given moment. I suggest that using chance in the decision-making process can free one from the need to control and from worrying about making what one believes to be the right or perfect decision.

In Chapter 3 I will explain my definition of what chance is, as perceived by and experienced by humans, and my insight that chance, as experienced from a contemporary secular perspective, is the coming together of seemingly random events, which are isolated, abstracted and then bestowed with significance. That, from a human perspective, chance does not exist until it is isolated and acknowledged.

The fourth chapter discusses commodification in contemporary secular society; with particular emphasis on the commodification of art and spiritual practice. It discusses the absorption of eastern spirituality into western neo-liberal culture, and also sets the parameters for the commodification of aleatory processes, which is explored in Part Two of the thesis.

In the second part of the thesis, each chapter deals with a different aspect of the commodification of aleatory processes through my experimental and practical work. The chapters also include a literature review of the research and a critical engagement with areas of interest that relate to the works.

Primary research objectives:

1. The primary aim of this practice-as-research project has been to explore aleatory art processes and practices, with the aim of discovering how they could be adopted for use in a different context, outside of art practice. I wanted to find out whether, or how, aleatory processes could be used to examine and make changes to personal lives.

2. I want to critically explore how we can make aleatory art 'products' out of commercial media and processes. I want to investigate the commodification of aleatory practice and determine to what extent access to chance could be commodified.

Secondary research objectives:

2. A secondary aim of this project is to re-introduce aleatory systems and processes into contemporary audience, both within and outside of artistic practice.

Two definitions that have emerged from the project:

Chance – (in human terms) is the isolation or abstraction of seemingly random objects or events that one bestows with significance.

Aleatorikal - Aleatory practice that places one into a *direct relationship or union* with chance.

Research methodologies:

Practice Based Research:

I decided early on that practice-based research would be the best way to explore my hypothesis. As I agree with R L Skains[5], that:

> … the creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge. This method is applied to original investigations seeking new knowledge through practice and its outcomes. Claims of originality are demonstrated through the creative artefacts. (2018: Online)

A key aspect of this research was to experiment with aleatory ideas and, through praxis, re-invent them as new works.

It was not the intention to collect quantative data on the works, as would be the case with the marketing of traditional consumer products. As Roland Barthes suggests, the contemporary author is '… born simultaneously with the text…' (1977: 145). The artefacts were created and would be made available to the consumer in a retail environment and not the art gallery. I want them to produce their own meaning.

I intended to get feedback on the usability of the works as I experimented, which I did. This feedback is recorded in the chapters relating to each individual work.

What follows is a description and justification of the research methods used:

Methods	Aims and Objectives
Books, academic papers, journal articles, websites, newspapers and magazines, films, television and radio programmes, musical recordings, voice recordings, lectures and performances. (For comprehensive list see	Research into relevant philosophical, theoretical, artistic, scientific and practical information that has informed both theory and practice.

[5] R L Skains is a researcher at Bangor University, Maine, USA.

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A series of fourteen A5 notebook and sketchbooks	For the recording of research, the formulation of concepts, ideas and solving of problems relating to both theory and practice.
Graphic 2D mock-ups, Packaging mock-ups, laser printing and commercial printing, 3D printing and laser-cutting. **Digital cameras, Computer software programmes for visualisation (Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator)**	The creation of experimental aleatory processes and the creation of mock-up commercial products to test out ideas and designs.
Discussions (in person, by telephone and by email) with artists, theorists, writers and academics	Testing out of theories, concepts relating to research and practice. Asking questions relating to their own practice.
Practical use and exploration of past and current aleatory systems and objects	To test out the different concepts identified by research and to help develop starting points for practical work.
Web-based random chance generators, programmes and serendipity engines	Exploration of current digital and web-based aleatory processes and ideas. Developing an understanding of how original systems have been adapted for the digital environment.
Visiting Exhibitions, galleries and shops	Collecting of digital imagery, Understanding of artist's processes and creative practices.
Papers delivered at national and international conferences	To test out ideas and theories amongst peers, theorists, artists, musicians and academics:

Colton, D. (2017) *Oblique Strategies, Dice and Train Commuters. The re-imagining of interventionist aleatory art systems to change personal realities.* Paper presented at: *The Twelfth International Conference on The Arts in Society.* Sorbonne/ American University of Paris, France. 2017.

Colton, D. (2017) *Beyond Aleatoricism? The case for varying distinctions between types of aleatory or chance process in the arts.* Paper presented at: *Music and/as Process: Fifth annual conference in association with the Society of Minimalist Music.* University of Wolverhampton, UK. 2017.

Colton, D. (2015) *Change your life - Cut it up. Creating new possibilities: What can the textural cut-up tell us about ourselves? An exploration of textural cut-ups. How 'systematic derangement' works in a creative environment, and how we can adapt the techniques to discover more about ourselves and our relationship with society.* Paper Presented at: *The Tenth International Conference on The Arts in Society.* Imperial College, London UK.

Colton, D. (2015) *Hiding in plain sight… How aleatory or chance art works and 'systems' can be presented as consumer objects and used as a tool for changing lives.* Paper presented at: *The University of Wolverhampton Annual Research Conference,* Wolverhampton, UK. 2015.

Exhibiting experimental and completed work

Feedback on creative processes and ideas:

Colton, D. (2017) *Made in Wolves. Commuter Curve-ball Cards* included in exhibition. Wolverhampton Art Gallery, UK. 2017.

Colton, D. (2017) *The Luckybag of Life: Can we appropriate William Burroughs' aleatory cut-up techniques to gain insights into our personal lives?* Exhibition of art-work presented at: *The 9th MMU Postgraduate Research Conference*, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK. 2017.

Colton, D. (2016) *The Suicide Box and the Zen Mop.* Exhibition of art-work presented at: *The MMU 'Words at Play' Exhibition.* Manchester Metropolitan University (Cheshire), Crewe, UK. 2016.

Reviewing and testing of my conceptual practical work by colleagues and members of the public	Feedback on creative processes and ideas, with particular emphasis on the practical application and the outcomes.

PART One: The Critical Framework to the Project

CHAPTER 1: Beyond aleatoricism? The case for varying distinctions between types of aleatory, or chance processes in art practice[6]

I first became interested in aleatory systems in the early 1980s, when I bought a copy of the I Ching, the Chinese Book of Changes[7]. Occasionally, I used the system to make decisions regarding my life, and although I can no longer remember the questions or the answers, I can still remember the feelings of excitement and danger at the thought of giving over control to something outside of myself. I felt the same thrill when years later I experimented with a set of Oblique Strategy cards. I reflected on these experiences as I wrote the proposal for this PhD project.

'I want to re- establish the case for indeterminacy as a primer in creative work' - this was the first line of my original proposal. I outlined how I believed that indeterminacy as a primer for creating art had fallen out of fashion and gave my reasons for wanting to resurrect it. When I read it back now it seems clear that what I really meant at the time was not re-establishing indeterminacy as a working method but exploring the chance methods and primers themselves. In retrospect, I was not particularly interested in the completed artworks.

I was engaged by the tools and processes themselves - Eno and Schmidt's Oblique Strategies, Burroughs' cut-ups, the psycho-geographic ideas of Sophie Calle and Bas Jan Ader's gravity art. I was excited by the methodologies and the processes. I wanted to find out if we could apply these ideas/systems to ourselves and how this might affect us. I wondered what would happen if we took these systems and ideas out of an artistic environment and into our personal lives.

An important facet of this project is the need to make the distinction between art that is created using chance as a catalyst or primer, and art that puts one into chance situations. Whilst the term aleatory or aleatoric is now used to describe all artworks that utilise chance or the random in their creation, I suggest that there are subtle differences between work that has been made using chance in the creative process, and work that instead pushes the artist or viewer into chance encounters and situations. In this chapter I will make the case for distinctions between types of aleatory or chance art practice.

[6] This chapter was originally presented as a paper at: *Music and/as Process: Fifth annual conference in association with the Society of Minimalist Music.* University of Wolverhampton, UK. 2017.

[7] The *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* is an ancient Chinese text. It uses chance throws of coins or sticks to determine one of sixty-four 'hexagrams' which are then used for oracular purposes. Both Confucianism and Taoism have their roots in the *I Ching*.

As I explained in the introduction, the term aleatoric was accredited to Werner Meyer-Eppler in 1957. However, in his 1955 lecture (given in German), *Statistische und psychologische Klangprobleme* (Statistic and Psychologic Problems of Sound). the term 'aleatorik' (German noun) was used by Meyer-Eppler, to describe music that has some element determined by chance; that is; 'determined in general but depends on chance in detail' (Meyer-Eppler, 1955: 22). An apparent mistake in the English translation in 1957, coined the term 'aleatoric' (English adjective) [8]. It is interesting that, in effect, the term that became synonymous with chance art came into being as an act of chance and was actually created by Meyer-Eppler *and* his translator, Alexander Goehr.

'Determined in general' implies the setting up of a system that will allow for some element of chance in the detail. The system must be defined or constructed, and this will always add an element of intervention in, or control of, the chance process. In his 2014 chapter; *B S Johnson and the Aleatoric novel*, academic and writer Sebastian Jenner suggests that there is an etymological link between alea or dice and the aleatoric novel. That the aleatoric novel *or any aleatoric structure or process* (my italics), is always controlled by prescribed boundaries. With the die, only one of six surfaces can land face up when the die is thrown. He points out that; 'Aleatoric art therefore always enacts a conscious engagement with the concept of chance' (Jenner, 2014: 72).

Marcel Duchamp considered his 1913/14 work, *3 Standard Stoppages* to be one of his most important, as he believed it allowed him to see a way of escaping from '… those traditional methods of expression long associated with art' (Molderings, 2006: xi). The work was a chance system and was comprised of Duchamp setting himself detailed instructions and boundaries for the realisation of the work, which he then followed, dropping 3 one metre lengths of string from one metre in height onto a wooden board and then varnished them in place where they had fallen. Finally, they were set in a wooden box (fig 2).

30 See *Admoniitoric Note* by Arthur Jacobs in *The Musical Times,* 1966.

Figure 2: Colton, D., 2015. Duchamp's 3 Standard Stoppages. Tate Gallery Liverpool [photograph] (private collection).

Duchamp later described the work as 'my first use of 'chance' as a medium' (Molderings, 2006: xii). According to Margaret Iverson in *Chance- Documents of Contemporary Art*:

> [Duchamp's] instruction dictates the initial conditions of this mock experiment, but it does not determine the outcome; on the contrary, the instruction is a device for evading authorial or artistic agency and so generating chance events and unexpected results. (Iverson, 2010: 12)

In 1920 the Dadaist poet, Tristan Tzara attempted the same thing with poetry:

> He cut newspaper articles up into tiny pieces, none of them longer than a word, put the words in a bag, shook them well, and allowed them to flutter on to the table. The arrangement (or lack of it) in which they fell constituted a 'poem', a Tzara poem, and was intended to reveal something of the mind and personality of the author. (Richter, 1965, reprinted 2016: 54)

Tzara's apparent method was to pick the cuttings totally at random, without any conscious input from the poet. However, I agree with Oliver Harris[9] when he argues that Tzara's 'poem' was an act of 'Dadaist destruction' and an '… ironic, anti-aesthetic manifesto stratagem, a performance trick rather than a creative blueprint' (2005: Online). [10]
The writer and academic, Mary Anne Caws suggests that in Tzara's work of this time 'The elements of action are juxtaposed without any apparent grammatical or semantic links' (Caws, 2005: 6). These initial experiments in by-passing conscious artistic control, which

[9] Professor of American Literature at Keele University.

[10] This is not possible- many aspects of the process, the choice of the newspaper and what is cut from it for example, is still a choice made by the artist. This work will be discussed further in chapter 6.

began with the Dadaists, later, came into their own with the development of the computer, electronic music and algorithmic and generative art. In the early 1950s, the WDR Electronic Music Studio, set up by Werner Meyer-Eppler, Robert Beyer and Herbert Eimert and composers like Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen used mathematical systems and processes in the compositional process (Iverson, 2006). More recently, Brian Eno produced *Scape*, an app that generates music that changes every time it is listened to (ITunes, no date: Online).

In 1935, the musician John Cage[11] created *Quartet*, one of his first pieces of chance experimental music. His musicians drummed and banged on different surfaces and objects, including pieces of randomly chosen trash from a junkyard. Later, however, and this is an important point, he included a timpani drum and a Chinese gong to add some conventional elements to the piece (Larson, 2012:52). According to the writer Kay Larson:

> The musical reclamation of noise' became Cage's mission. Wasn't 'noise' a kind of Duchampian readymade after all? Rather than signing a bicycle wheel or a shovel, Cage could enlist the music of ordinary life going on around him. (2012: 52)

On the sleeve notes to Eno's 1975 album, *Discreet Music* he explains how he 'gravitated towards situations and systems that, once set into operation, could create music with little or no intervention on my part' (Eno, 1975). He describes how on *Discreet Music* he took a technical approach, setting up a system of tape recorders and other pieces of equipment. The score, he explained, is the operational diagram of the apparatus used, and printed on the back of the sleeve, (fig 3) and '… is almost identical to the structure of [Steve] Reich's *It's Gonna Rain* (Eno in Tamm, 1995:42).

[11] Cage's work was influenced by the teachings of the 9th century Zen master, Huang Po and his own Zen teacher, D T Suzuki (see Larson, 2012).

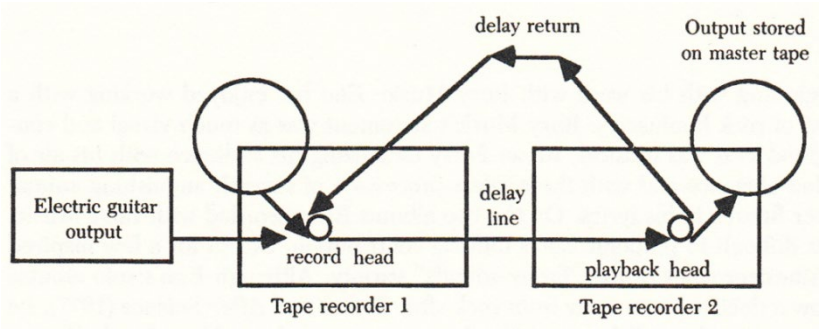


Figure 3: (1975, reissued 2009) 'Music recording system.' *Discreet Music,* EMI

The music is generated from sections of Pachelbel's *Canon.* The performers play following set rules that determine tempo, duration and pitch, which are then fed through the system set up by Eno. The result is a piece of work that is organised and systemised by the artist but created using aleatoric systems and processes. According to Eno, the participation of the artist is important and that, although aleatoric techniques by themselves can yield interesting results, he believed that it did matter what the input was (Eno in Tamm, 1995). I also found the same thing when I experimented with cut-ups from magazines (see Chapter 6). The themes of the source material had a dominating effect on the cuttings and I soon began to manipulate these sources to create more of the effects that I wanted to achieve. I agree with Eno, that the quality of the final work depends on the ability of the artist to manipulate the different elements[12].

The previous examples are illustrations of two subtly different uses of chance in creative work. They both illustrate a type of artistic practice that utilises chance *systems* that are defined by the artist to help them escape from conscious control and to break habits. Whether the artist only captures the resulting work in the case of Tzara's poetry or instead adds to it or manipulates it in some way like Cage's *Quartet* or Eno's *Discreet music*, broadly, these two ways of working share the same origin. As Iverson suggests, 'It is this gap between intention and outcome that seems crucial to the meaning of chance in art (Iverson, 2010:12).

[12] Although this is a significant point when creating a 'work of art', the creative ability of the user of my works is not particularly important. Only the *Raw Words* (see Chapter 6) need any creative input, and, for the purpose of using them, this is only desirable and not crucial.

A variation on the previous process involves the artist linking a similar systematic approach to what can be called 'nature'. For example, the workings of physics. Canadian photographer Stoffel de Roover uses smoke to create frozen images in time (fig 4), capturing '…the amazing shapes and forms that smoke usually hides in split-seconds, only visible when we stop time with the help of a camera' (De Roover, no date: Online).

Figure 4: Stoffel de Roover – Smoke Image (Aleatoric Art Gallery, 2016: online).

Painter Lorene Anderson uses gravity to move the paint around the canvas (Aleatory Art Gallery, no date: Online). The website of the *Aleatoric Art Gallery* based in Houston, Texas, showcases the work of fifty contemporary artists, who the gallery says are united by '…their collaboration with nature and the laws that govern the universe' (Aleatoric Art Gallery, no date: Online). Just like Duchamp's 'readymades', or Cage's found sounds, natural elements are utilised or manipulated to create works of aleatory art.

The examples I have given here are to illustrate two basically similar starting points for the creation of aleatory art-works. These works can be realised in any discipline or medium. The artist defines the system and then either captures or manipulates the results. These definitions are particularly evident in musical composition where indeterminacy, chance and aleatory are used interchangeably (see Roig-Francoli[13], 2008). The artist becomes, in effect, an alchemist or what I would call, an art scientist – experimenting with process to find

[13] Roig-Francoli refers to these categories collectively as *aleatoriality* (See 2008: 340).

insights by escaping conscious control. What I find much more exciting though, is the chance art that places the viewer and/or the artist into a direct relationship with chance itself which I am now going to discuss.

As a 'musical' performance, John Cage's work *4' 33'* is four minutes and thirty-three minutes of musical silence. Working from a musical score by Cage, the pianist (or performer) opens the piano lid and sits out each section of the piece without playing a single note. The idea being that the audience is exposed to an awareness of the ambient sounds inside (and outside) the auditorium or the random sounds of nature; of life happening around them. Cage's piece is a system which exposes us to chance. By engaging with it we are pushed to acknowledge the 'now', to live in the moment, to listen, to participate. This work is different from earlier Cage works like *Quartet* and the 1951 *Music for Changes. 4' 33'* is still a system that uses chance as a structure, and uses 'found sounds' like *Quartet*, but it also works on another level. It places the audience at its centre, and, in doing so, it connects them to chance and the randomness of the moment. They don't just watch or listen; they are an active part. It is this active participation that I believe makes this type of work different from pure aleatory art, and for me, this is a key observation.

Discovering George Brecht's[14] *Event Scores* was an important moment in my research. The academic, Gascia Ouzounian describes the *Event Scores* as '… brief elemental texts that typically took the form of lists or instructions' (Ouzounian, 2011: 199). Brecht's idea was that chance or aleatory methods not only create artistic possibilities, but metaphysical ones as well 'by allowing the artist to transcend personality, culture and, ultimately, self' (Brecht in Ouzounian, 2011: 207).

Brecht was influenced by the Zen teachings of D T Suzuki (who is acknowledged as the teacher of John Cage and largely credited with introducing Zen Buddhism to the west). In Ouzounian's article she cites Suzuki:

[14] Brecht was a chemist and a conceptual artist. A member of the Fluxus group.

> There is something divine in being spontaneous and not being hampered by human conventionalities and their artificial hypocrisies. There is something direct and fresh in this lack of restraint by anything human, which suggests a divine freedom and creativity. Nature never deliberates; it acts directly out of its own heart, whatever this may mean. In this respect Nature is divine. Its 'irrationality' transcends human doubts or ambiguities, and in our submitting to it, or rather accepting it, we transcend ourselves. (Suzuki in Ouzounian, 2011: 207)

George Brecht's *Event Scores* were an attempt to enable a kind of enlightening or transcendent experience; the aim being that by focusing on a selected fragment of experience as a minimalistic performance piece, an indeterminate *moment* or *event*, the unified nature of reality would be revealed. In Zen, the self that transcends itself, that realises the non- existence of a separate self, achieves enlightenment. Brecht's aim was to attempt to facilitate this state through aleatory art practice. The *Event Score*, *Three Aqueous Events* is a good example:

> (The card) lists three momentary states that an aqueous 'object' may occupy over time: ice, water, steam. A realization of this score entails performing (arranging, observing, ordering) these objects/states and, through this performance, revealing their condition as arbitrary points within a continuous field, and indeed their existence within a continuous state of flux between these points. In making this observation, *the performer* [my italics] ideally realizes, and more precisely experiences, his or her own place within this continuum. Such an experience entails a kind of transcendence in which any stable sense of self is at least momentarily undermined through its connection to this larger system of flux. (Ouzounian, 2011: 208)

It is interesting to note that it is often the performer who is to be affected by the *Event Score*, and not the observer. It is the act of engaging with the work that facilitates the experience. In this type of process, art and experience come together.

Sophie Calle's psycho-geographic works often involved random encounters with strangers. In *Suite Venitienne* she followed a stranger from Paris to Venice. Other works saw her exploring peoples' hotel rooms whilst posing as a chamber maid, working as a striptease artist, and phoning complete strangers from the numbers in a found address book (Whitechapel Gallery, 2009: 10). These works put her in uncertain or potentially dangerous situations. I would argue that the experience of the artist who places herself in situations

like this is very different from that of the passive viewer or audience looking from the outside. As Lejeune points out, 'any form of art involves some level of interaction between artist and chance' (2012: 83), however, the artist, even though part of the process, is still on the outside. What Calle is doing is placing herself at the very centre of the work; making herself part of it, like the artist's paint or the writer's words.

The Dutch performance artist, Bas Jan Ader cycled into an Amsterdam canal, deliberately fell from his house roof and hung from a tree until his grip failed causing him to fall. All of these works were captured on film. (see Bas Jan Ader - Films and Video Work, 1970 - 74, re-released in 2008). Although the viewer does experience a kind of anticipatory tension in the expectation of what is about to happen, the act of participation would be far more intense, and that placing *oneself* in the hands of chance and gravity is the real intention of the work. As Iverson points out, 'Ader would repeatedly thrust himself into the centre of an irreconcilable dichotomy: the contradictory position of being both the subject and object of a story' (Iverson, 2010: 154). According to Ader, his work was not about 'body art' or 'body sculpture'. He comments, 'When I fell off the roof of my house or into a canal, it was because gravity made itself master over me' (Ader in Iverson, 2010: 155).

The works discussed here demonstrate a type of aleatory art practice that places the artist and/or audience into a direct relationship with chance; as Iverson says, placing one in the contradictory position of being both subject and object. They are not controlling, ordering, experiencing or viewing the result of a process, or watching the process taking place. They are actually participating in the work, and with chance itself. They are both subject and object.

To varying degrees, by placing yourself into a chance situation you are moving beyond yourself. You are not in control; by participating you have become an object of chance; active, and yet passive. Again, these examples try to illustrate a subtly different form of aleatory art that involves the viewer, the audience, and mostly the artists or creator of the work.

This is even more evident when we consider the work of Luke Rhinehart. His 1971 novel *The Dice Man* was an experiment in changing the personality through chance. The protagonist, a bored psychiatrist begins to use a dice to free himself from his own personality and habits. The book is a fiction and a thought experiment on what living like this would be like- where it might lead. Rhinehart's [15] hypothesis, expressed through the medium of the novel, is that using dice to make choices can free the user from repetitious behaviour and habit, and it can bring change.

Using dice to make decisions, he says, can change perspectives, helping to alter conscious personal reality and even shift between realities. His later book (2000), *The Book of the Die* was a manual of practical suggestions 'intended to help free us from patterns which dam our lives' (Rhinehart, 2000: iii). This book takes the aleatory process of using dice out of the novel and presents it as a method to try out. The book suggests the possibility of us using dice as a primer to change lives. The key point here is that this form of aleatory practice is personal and makes one the subject of their own experimental work of art - one triggered or manipulated by chance. I argue that there is a case for differentiating this type of aleatory practice- a practice that puts one into a direct relationship with chance- a relationship that can change perspectives, thinking and actions.

My practice involves appropriating aleatory art systems and practices and then creating objects that can be used to place us into this direct relationship with chance. As Dewey suggests:

> Because objects of art are expressive, they are a language. Rather they are many languages. For each art has its own medium, and that medium is especially fitted for one kind of communication. (Dewey, 1980, reprinted 2005: 110)

To this end, each object is intended to access a slightly different relationshipwith chance.

Artists utilise different 'instruments' in the creation of their artworks, for example, the dancer's body, the musical instrument, the brush and the actor's voice. We can use these tools to help us express ourselves. I suggest that chance can be played like music or

[15] Rhinehart is a pen name, his real name is George Cockcroft.

manipulated like paint - we can use it to create drama or to create insights and connections. Chance allows us to place our conscious reality in a new place- just like art, we just need the tools, and this is what my creative practice explores.

My starting point has been the various chance primers developed by artists as devices to escape from repetition and habit in the creative process. These starting points will be discussed in detail in part two, but include, cut-up texts, Bibliomancy, tarot cards, scratch cards, the *I Ching*, dice, *Monopoly* cards, the *Oblique Strategies*, Brecht's *Event Scores* and found objects.

If, as I suggest, there is a difference between work that has been made using chance in the creative process, and work that instead pushes us into chance encounters and situations, then there is a case to be made for a new term to denote it, rather than using the one term, aleatorical, to describe them all. I would propose the variant, *aleatorikal*,[16] to differentiate aleatory practice that places one into a *direct* relationship with chance. The 'k' makes the link to Meyer-Eppler's original German noun (aleatorik). It is also appropriated from the occultist, Aleister Crowley, who added the 'k' to magic to delineate his magick[17]- the art of controlling or manipulating the forces of nature as opposed to stage *magic.* There is no suggestion of an occult link, but I do suggest that engaging with chance can have a profound effect. Aleatorikal therefore, is a term for practice that pushes the practitioner into a direct relationship with chance.

[16]Throughout the rest of this thesis I will use this term to differentiate aleatory practice that places an individual into a *direct* relationship with chance.

[17] See Symonds (1971).

CHAPTER 2: Reality Tunnels: Truth is in the eye of the beholder

This second chapter discusses how human consciousness perceives reality. It draws on contemporary research into neuroscience and how the workings of the brain effect human perceptions of reality. It also draws on the philosophical ideas of artists and thinkers such as Gurdjieff, Bergson, Huxley, Leary and Wilson and recent research into hallucinogenic drugs, and how these also alter perception. It will make the case for a personal individual perception of reality as an explanation of how the contemporary secular mind relates to the world, and then explains what impact this has on this project. As this is a practice- based PhD, I am not setting out to prove how the mind perceives reality, but instead, use this eclectic research to argue that each person sees reality through a set of personal filters that are individual and not fixed; that are fluid, can be changed; and that this change can be brought about by engaging with chance. The chapter will also discuss the decision-making process, and how recent research acknowledges that personal realities and emotions effect this process.

Personally, I am aware that I inhabit a world made up of my own thoughts, preoccupations and ideas. If I am feeling positive, this affects my mood, and this extends out into my interactions with the world. My views on other people; politics, nature and life are affected by my relationships with others and mediated by my upbringing, my education, personality, prejudices and culture. I am a product of all these things, including the temporal space that I find myself in - my mind and body interact with the world through a set of personal filters- this is my construct…

According to the writer Robert Anton Wilson '… the world we perceive through our senses and nervous systems is not a 'real world', but a construction of our own making (…) our own private work of art' (Wilson, 1977, reprinted 2013: iii).

Professor Donald D Hoffman of the University of California suggests that people are either naïve realists - the world out there is real, and I am separate from it, or critical realists - I know the reality I experience is a construct, but this is how I experience it (Hoffman et al, 2010: 505). The philosopher, Edmund Husserl called this viewpoint 'the natural attitude' (Husserl, 2006:2).

Verification of this and the suggestion that realities are somewhat restricted can be found in *The Doors of Perception* (1954), Aldous Huxley's[18] seminal work on psychedelic drugs. The book documents his experiments with the hallucinogen mescaline, a derivative of the peyote cactus. Huxley's hypothesis was that the reality we experience is only a 'measly trickle' or mere glimpse of the 'totality of awareness' that exists. Huxley (like Bergson) suggested that one of the brain's main functions is to protect us from being confused or overwhelmed by information and experiences that are not directly needed for survival. He posited that the function of the brain, nervous system and sense organs is like a 'reducing valve' and overall, '…*eliminative* and not productive' (Huxley, 1994: 11).

In a 2012 article published in *TIME Magazine,* a UK based research experiment with hallucinogens supports Huxley's ideas as outlined above. The experiment demonstrated how the hallucinogen psilocybin (found in *magic mushrooms*) effects the connectivity of the brain. Initially, researchers believed that the feelings of connection with the universe and the hyperconsciousness associated with the drug must be caused by an increase in brain activity. In fact, the research showed the opposite; that psilocybin actually *reduces* brain activity (Szalavitz, 2012: Online). This was particularly evident in the regions of the brain that deal with the senses, which, when working normally, govern the way we sense the world and set us in a stable reality. Robin Carhart-Harris, lead author of the study[19], suggested that the results imply that a lot of brain activity is dedicated to keeping this particular grip on reality, and he suggests that the finding was 'consistent with Aldous Huxley's 'reducing valve' metaphor [which proposes] that the mind/brain works to constrain its experience of the world' (Harris et al, 2012).

These two examples support the notion that human perception is about functioning in the world rather than seeing what is 'true' or 'real'. In effect, the brain is set up to work within a

[18] Even though some of Huxley's ideas were put forward earlier by philosophers like Bergson, I believe the Huxley was an excellent catalyst for a number of the ideas, movements and people that I discuss in this thesis.

[19]Neural correlates of the psychedelic state as determined by fMRI studies with psilocybin (2012).

narrowly defined set of parameters. Neuroscientist John C Lilly takes this point further when he argues that all adults are programmed bio-computers. [20] He says, 'Literally each of us may be our programs, nothing more, nothing less' (Lilly, 1967, reprinted 2014: iv).

Hoffman goes on to present a useful argument in his article, 'Natural selection and veridical perceptions' (2010). He argues that '… perception need not, and in general, does not resemble any aspect of reality' (Hoffman et al, 2010: 505). He explains that the 'interface theory' puts forward the concept that perception can be useful because it is *not* true. Just as the graphical user interface of a desktop PC masks the complexity of the workings of the computer, perception that focuses on what matters for survival is more useful to us[21] (Hoffman et al, 2010: 505).

Human perceptions of reality are personal and subjective[22]. Each person interprets the world through their own consciousness and the biases of personality, upbringing, mood, culture and conditioning. Reality is, therefore, individual and personal. These personal perceptions can become restrictive, habitual and can even become tunnel-like, which led to them being described as *reality tunnels* by Timothy Leary (See *Neuropolitique*, 1988: 51- 62). The concept of the reality tunnel has its roots in the philosopher John Locke's representative realism but was developed further by Leary in the 1960s. It was later expanded on by the writer, Robert Anton Wilson[23]. According to Leary and Wilson, individual perceptions can become restrictive, but are not fixed. Our perceptions of reality can be altered. Leary believed that one way to escape from the reality tunnel was through the use of hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD.

Leary described how from the time of his first LSD trip he had been acutely aware that everything he perceived was a construct of his own consciousness. That everyone lived in a

[20] Dr John C Lilly was the originator of the Isolation or flotation tank.

[21] '*Metaphysical solipsism* claims that there is no reality beyond my perceptions. Perceptions do not resemble reality, nor are they an interface to reality, because there is no reality other than my perceptions' (Hoffman, 2010).

[22] Subjectivity has been brought into question by Derrida and Lacan. It has been used here to describe a viewpoint that one would consider to be their individual point of view regarding a given situation.

[23] See the *Cosmic Trigger* Trilogy (1977) and *Prometheus Rising* (1983).

'neutral cocoon' or 'private reality' (Leary, 1983:18). According to John Higgs, Leary's biographer, he proposed that you could reject your reality and replace it with a different one (Higgs, 2006:49). Leary believed that we each have multiple personalities, or realities available to us. His view was that living in an unsatisfactory or negative reality was foolish when there were an infinite number of realities that the brain could use instead. Leary put forward the notion that the brain is an 'underutilized biocomputer' with billions of unused neurons. He believed that '…consciousness and intelligence can be systematically expanded. That the brain can be reprogrammed' (Leary, 1983: 33). This idea was the central theme of Leary's philosophy. It is interesting to note the similarities between Leary's philosophy and that of Rhinehart who instead proposed using dice to free up our multiple 'selves':

> Society is a vast conspiracy to make us a single self… and to escape this we must somehow become detached from all those habits and values and attitudes that society has encrusted us in. One of the ways to do this is to force ourselves to be other than we would normally be… (Rhinehart, 2012: Online)

Charles Tart[24], contributing to ideas on awakening the consciousness initially put forward by Gurdjieff[25], introduced the term 'consensus trance' which he described as 'the sleep of everyday life' (Tart, 1986: 85), and 'cultural hypnosis' (Tart, 1986:90). He quotes Gurdjieff when he explains that '… we are no single 'I', instead, we change personalities as we change our moods and our feelings. It is an illusion to consider oneself as a 'permanent and unchangeable I' (Gurdjieff in Tart, 1986: 117).

Not only are realities fluid and unfixed, but so too are personalities. All humans have the potential to change. This is also supported by contemporary advances in neuroscience, that suggest that rather than fixed, the brain is in a constant state or neurogenesis, or renewal. According to a recent study published in *Cell* journal[26], the brain *continuously generates* new neurons. The study suggests that; '… these neurons become functionally active and are thought to contribute to learning and memory, especially during their maturation phase, when they have extraordinary plasticity' (Gonçalves et al, 2016: 910). As well as this

[24] Professor Charles Tart was the author of the book, *Altered States of Consciousness* (1969).

[25] G I Gurdjieff was an Armenian spiritual teacher, traveller and philosopher, active around the turn of the 20th century.

[26] See Gonçalves, G T., Schafer, S T., Gage, F H. (2016) Adult Neurogenesis in the Hippocampus.

capacity of renewal and change, from the moment of conception, each person begins to develop a unique brain structure. The study goes on to describe our brains as being in a constant cycle of upheaval and regeneration, enabling the development of individual brains of endless diversity (2016: 911).

Each person may live in an individual reality tunnel, or construct of reality, but it is not fixed. Attitudes can be re-programmed personalities re-invented, minds changed, viewpoints changed, and different facets of the personality can be explored. It does not take hallucinogens or EST, Dianetics, Cybernetics or Neuro-Linguistic Programming. *Any* new experience has the capacity to change thinking patterns and engaging with chance can help to stimulate or change conscious realities. Chance can be played like music or manipulated like paint.

Emotions and Decision Making:

Decision making is linked to our own reality and our perception of our place in that reality. All of the works that I have created during this project rely on the user relinquishing some aspect of the decision-making process. Without this, they will not work. As Rhinehart argues, from a contemporary perspective, decisions are seen as important; that they have consequences, that making a *right* decision[27] is crucial. Because of this, it is easy to become overly attached to specific outcomes and the need to maintain control over decisions. The individual becomes afraid of making the *wrong* decision.

According to Loewenstein and Lerner, until recently 'Decision making was viewed as a cognitive process – a matter of estimating which of various alternative actions would yield the most positive consequences' (2003: 619). They go on to explain that since the early 21st century, the role of emotion has been recognised as an important aspect in decision making. A person may make a decision based on perceived emotional feelings as a result of the decision. For example, one may imagine how upset they would feel in the future if they

[27] There are, in effect, no right or wrong decisions. When I use the term 'right decision' I am referring to decisions made that are perceived to be in the decision maker's best interest at any given moment.

choose to bet on a horse and lose their savings. Loewenstein and Lerner suggest that decision making is also affected by the 'immediate emotions' felt either directly, a feeling of anxiety at the thought of going on an airplane, or indirectly, being in a pre-existing good mood may make one underestimate the problems associated with making a decision the goes wrong (2003). Having an emotional connection to our decisions can make it hard for an individual to go against what they believe is in their best interest.

Relinquishing control of decision making can be frightening, but according to Rhinehart, 'All decisions are illusions (…). No one ever decides anything' (Rhinehart, no date: Online). Rhinehart's views mirror those expressed in Buddhist thought. Zen philosophy is about revealing both this connectedness of all things and the absurdity of the abstract isolated moment. Zen and Taoist philosophies emphasise that any idea of a separate 'self' is an illusion (see Chapter 3) - this also includes personal decisions.
Also, in Chapter 3, I explain Bergson's view that humans pass from state to state, experiencing different sensations and feelings, and that the changes between these different states are the changes into which individual existence is divided. However, there is no feeling or idea that is not undergoing change at every moment. Decision making is part of this process. Decisions are emotional responses to one's perceived reality at a given moment.

Using chance in the decision-making process can free an individual from worrying about making the perceived right or perfect decision. From a Buddhist perspective, all experiences are useful; an individual has no way of knowing if a decision will ultimately be in her best interest, and for me, this is a key point.

CHAPTER 3: Chance: The Sewing Machine and the Umbrella

This chapter will examine three aspects of chance that are an important part of the critical framework that supports my project. These are,

1. Chance as experienced by contemporary secular culture[28];
2. Chance as potentially synchronous, linked moments in a universal totality of existence;
3. Chance as a creative connector of elements, events and ideas.

The chapter will explain how these three aspects of chance connect with each other, and how these connections create the conditions for the potential commodification of chance.

Chance as experienced by the contemporary secular mind:

From the eclectic research that I have done into perceptions of reality (discussed in Chapter 2), I argue that chance, as experienced in contemporary secular culture, is the coming together of seemingly random events, which an individual or group isolate, abstract and then bestow with significance. Lejeune suggests that '… the existence of chance is a relatively recent discovery' (2012:24) and that in pre- modern societies chance was seen as deterministic:

> … before Poincaré and Lorenz, the overriding philosophical frame of mind was that of strict Determinism, either theological or materialistic, neither apparently willing to give any credibility to chance. (2012: 24)[29]

From the contemporary secular perspective, chance is often seen as something to avoid. There is talk of chance *accidents* and efforts are made to find ways to control or mitigate it. In scientific experiments, the aim is to eliminate chance altogether (see Von Franz, 1980: 52). And as the German painter Rune Mields says; 'Chance is a word for something we don't know. It signifies our insecurity' (*Kunst des Zufalls* exhibition, 2010).

[28] As I pointed out in the introduction, I use the term, 'contemporary secular culture' when referring to the modern cultural sensibility that is relevant to the project.

[29] Henri Poincaré (1854 - 1912) One of the founders of chaos theory and Konrad Lorenz (1903 - 1989) one of the founders of modern ethology.

The human mind experiences events as causal, in that, events follow other events in a logical state of cause and effect. Temple Grandin, Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University explains that 'Confirmation bias is built into animal and human brains (…) our default assumption is that if Event 1 is followed closely by Event 2, then Event 1 caused Event 2' (Grandin and Johnson, 2005: 99). The philosopher Graham Harman[30] explains that we can't know whether cause and effect happens outside of our consciousness because we can never get outside of the human mind (2015, 30: 38). He goes on to suggest that it is the human mind that is the 'glue' between cause and effect[31] (2015, 34:26).

The term apophenia[32] describes the tendency for humans to attribute patterns and meaning to unrelated sequences of information or events - the perceiving of connections and patterns in random information. This is often seen in gambling, where, according to Cowan[33] (1969) whether a ball will fall into the red or black slot on a roulette wheel is believed to be influenced by the past. For example, if red has come up five times, then a black must be due when, in-fact the chances of either red or black will always be the same. Apophenia also accounts for superstitious thinking and behaviour, conspiracy theories and delusions. This human propensity to attribute meaning also extends to visual and auditory patterns and is well documented; the term pareidolia [34] accounts for images of a face on the moon, and images of Christ in a burnt piece of toast, for example. Much of human experience is subject to the human condition - what is experienced, how it is processed and what is believed. One of the writer William Burroughs' insights was to see that individuals perceive their environment as fragmentary. At any given moment, he suggested, we are multiple selves, with multiple viewpoints and our attention does not follow a simple cause and effect process. And the writer, Gary Valentine-Lachman points out that '…we are constantly scanning our environment peripherally, making unconscious associations that the dominant rational mind represses' (2001: 104). As Lejeune pointed out, in pre-modern societies, what today is called chance, was believed to be theological or materialistic determinism. From the research that I have undertaken, it is my conclusion that chance, as experienced by the contemporary secular mind, is as a series of causal factors that lead to a

[30] Graham Harman's lecture at Moderna Museet, Stockholm in 2015: *What is an Object?*

[31] The philosopher David Hume (1711 - 1776) also argued that there is no proof that cause and effect happened outside of the mind.

[32] The term was coined by the psychologist Klaus Conrad in 1958.

[33] See Joseph L Cowan, 'The Gambler's Fallacy'.

[34] Merriam-Webster, 2016,

personally significant experience or event. At this point these factors become a conscious part of that reality and are experienced as a chance occurrence.

On a physiological level, everything that one is and everything that one does is affected by chance. According to Richard Dawkins [35] 'The fundamental unit, the prime mover of all life, is the replicator' and these come into existence '… in the first place, by chance, by the random jostling of smaller particles' (Dawkins, 1976: 264). And Keith Bennett[36] suggests that evolution itself is chaotic; that 'Life on Earth is always unique, changing, and unpredictable' (Bennett, 2010: online).

As a starting point for my research I had my DNA analysed[37] to discover my probable ethnicity. According to the results my personal origins are; 25% Great Britain, 22% West European, 22% Ireland and 18% Scandinavia. There is also some Finland/ Northwest Russia (5%) and European Jewish (4%), and few other traces of the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, Greece, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. If I then isolate myself from the rest of humanity, this actual mix is mine alone and is unique[38]. I am an individual like no other. But even as I am made up of a unique DNA mix, I am also made of the same building blocks as everything else in the universe. Seen as part of a totality, I am not separate or unique, I am a small part of a connected universal reality. My physiology and psychology change and shift along with everything else. The view that I am an unchanging 'being' at the centre of things is also an illusion…

Much of Zen philosophy is about revealing both this connectedness of all things and the absurdity of the abstract isolated moment (see Suzuki (1962), Thien-An (1975) and Suzuki (2006). The practicing Buddhist and writer, Kay Larson (2012) suggests that Zen and Taoist philosophies emphasise that any idea of a separate 'self' is an illusion. This idea of connectedness is explained by the theoretical physicist, David Bohm (1980) with the analogy that all reality could be considered as a flowing stream. If we look closely, we can see ever changing patterns and currents, which although we can isolate them, have no independent existence outside of the stream. He also suggested that 'any describable event, object or entity is an abstraction from an unknown and indefinable totality of flowing movement.' (Bohm, 1980: 62).

[35] The *Selfish Gene*, 1976.

[36] Professor Keith Bennett. Previously an Evolutionary Paleoecologist at Queens, Belfast.

[37] In June 2018, Dr Tom Booth, a bio-archaeologist who specialises in ancient DNA, claimed that DNA testing kits were inaccurate beyond three centuries (see Marshall, 2018). Even so, I include these findings to make my point about the random nature of human diversity.

[38] In 2017 my father had his DNA analysed too. His was 65% English, 30% Scottish/Welsh and 5% European Jewish.

The philosopher, Henri Bergson suggests that each of us pass from state to state; experiencing different sensations and feelings, and that the changes between these different states are the changes into which existence is divided. However, there is no feeling or idea that is not undergoing change at every moment. This apparent 'discontinuity' is caused by the tendency to focus on a series of separate acts, when in-fact, '… there is only a gentle slope' (see Bergson *In* Pearson and Mullarkey, 2002: 210) or a gradual fading from state to state.

This totality, as suggested by Bergson and Bohm, is not just evident in the material world but also in every aspect of human thought and action. Ideas are passed through time and through space, new knowledge comes into being and then is subsumed by even newer ideas. Humans connect to each other through stories, through actions and ideas, but nothing is fixed or final. All of it is in a constant flux. Like a photograph, the moment is only experienced when it is isolated – a photo of me is not me; it is a captured moment in time and space, in two dimensions.

If we consider a Buddhist reading, then thought and action are in constant flux- moving between the inner and the outer realities of human consciousness and interacting with the individual's material realities. To this extent, the internal and external are connected. Because of this each person lives with chance every moment that they are alive. Each person is exposed to constant change and perpetual chance moments, but they do not see them, they are part of the 'flowing stream.' Chance moments are only noticed when they are isolated - and I would argue that these moments are only perceptible in retrospect too.

If I decide to drive home a different way, and at some point on the journey I have an accident, I can blame it on chance. I can remember my decision to take a different route, and the 'chance' events that led up to the accident. I can chastise myself for not taking my usual route. But all of this is just abstract thought. My mind is focusing on the memories; the snapshots that I choose to give significance. The moments only mean something to me. They do not really exist outside of my personal reality...

My conclusion is that the chance moment is a frozen moment (or moments) of possibility or change as perceived by the human mind. I argue that when events are examined retrospectively, they are seen as isolated moments, or a series of moments that follow

cause and effect. This is part of an unconscious process. These chance moments can be created by consciously placing oneself in the path of alternative possibilities; the roll of a die, selecting a tarot card, or tossing a coin, for example. Chance, in human terms, does not exist independently - it only exists if a person or group isolate it and bestow it with meaning. To use Harman's metaphor, the human mind is the glue that binds individual abstract moments into a retrospective pattern and calls it chance. Chance moments only exist in an abstract sense - in isolation from the constant flow of Bohm's stream. As I suggested earlier in this chapter, human beings can create meaning in almost anything - they look for patterns and connections- it is in their nature to do so. For my PhD project, this is a rich starting point. How an individual can relate to the abstract moments that they create, and how they connect them together has great creative potential. To explore whether it is possible to change personal 'reality tunnels', change directions or adapt aleatory processes find new ways of seeing and experiencing individual realities.

This next section explains two key aspects of chance that grow out of these initial observations.

Chance as potentially synchronous, connected moments in a universal totality of existence:

Synchronicity, as coined by Jung, is a moment in space and time that has a quality of its own. What happens at that point has the individual *quality* of that point. All moments are unique and connected. Jung explains that:

> …synchronicity takes the coincidence of events in space and time as meaning more than mere chance, namely, a peculiar interdependence of objective events ... as well as the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers. (Jung in Wilhelm, 1951, Reprinted 2003: xx1v)

According to Bergson (2002), human personalities, which are accumulating experiences, are in a continuous state of change and evolution. Because of this, any state, although superficially similar to another, can never be repeated exactly. It is therefore impossible for

the constantly changing inner and outer universe[39] to repeat itself. Each moment in space and time is a unique abstract point. This is even more evident when considering synchronicity, seriality and acausal connections (see Jung (1983) and Kammerer in Koestler (1972). The Jungian psychologist, Maria Von Franz proposed that seeing everything from an egotistical or personal[40]point of view is actually very primitive: 'The Chinese view is more detached and philosophical- even if something appears bad for me, it is part of an existential 'whole' (Von Franz, 1980:47). Traditional Chinese philosophy asks what things tend to happen together in space and time. According to Von Franz (1980), they see a cluster of events that relate to the universal rhythm of the Universe. Everything is energy in flux and both the physical and psychological are connected. This also includes the *I Ching* hexagram and the dice number, which form a pattern or number of that particular moment in time and space. Jung suggested that whatever happens in a moment has the *quality* of that moment. He used his concept of synchronicity to describe how the *I Ching* works:

> … whoever invented the *I Ching* was convinced that the hexagram worked out in a certain moment coincided with the latter in quality no less than in time. To him the hexagram was the exponent of the moment in which it was cast- even more so than the hours of the clock or the divisions of the calendar could be (…) an indicator of the essential situation prevailing in the moment of its origin. This assumption involves a certain curious principle that I have termed synchronicity. (Jung in Wilhelm, 1951: xx1v)

The *I Ching* is a recognised tool for accessing the synchronous moment, but accessing these synchronous connections is more about observation and connecting. This idea of conscious observation or 'being awake' has been the subject of many philosophies (see Larson (2012), Gurdjieff [41]and Tart (1986), for example). If we take 'being awake' into account, then any system that in some way represents or isolates a given moment, should be readable in the same way as the *I Ching*. This would include cut-ups, cryptic interventionist cards and dice. In an interview with T*he Paris Review* Burroughs explained:

[39] For the purposes of this example I take the popular view that the internal universe refers to our thoughts, feelings, dreams and sense of 'self' and the outer universe refers to the external environment.

[40] The Ego was defined by Freud in *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Freud proposed three parts to the human psyche- the Id, the Ego and the Super Ego. The Ego is the realistic, outward looking aspect of the personality. The Ego is the constructed sense of 'self' or 'I'.

[41] Much of Buddhist philosophy is about being 'in the moment.' Gurdjieff, and later, Tart talked of escaping the 'sleepwalk' of everyday life.

> I was sitting in a lunchroom in New York having my doughnuts and coffee. I was thinking that one does feel a little boxed in New York, like living in a series of boxes. I looked out the window and there was a great big Yale [removal] truck. That's cut-up – a juxtaposition of what's happening outside and what you're thinking of. (Burroughs, 1965: Online)

This concept of moments in time and space as being unique, related well with my previous research, as outlined earlier, and the understanding that humans tend to abstract and bestow meaning on certain key moments. The idea that a moment could possess its own quality was intriguing[42]. This concept could validate the practice of astrology, for example, how the time and place of your birth could affect your personality and outlook... This will be discussed further in chapter 7.

What synchronicity suggests is that it is possible to tap into these unique moments, connect with the universal 'flow' of things- the universe, reality, or God.
Bourriaud posits that any image is just a moment. '… just as any point in space is both a memory of a time x, and the reflection of a space y'; further, he asks, '… Is this temporal factor frozen […] or is it a producer of potentialities?' (2002: 80).

Chance as a creative connector and driving force for ideas:

There is a passage in Lautreamont's 1874 work, *Chants de Maldoror* which goes 'As beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella'. This prose poem was to influence Andre Breton and the Surrealists[43] (Thiers, 2017: 49) in their search for stimuli to jolt the unconscious mind.

As I have already suggested, chance, as experienced by the contemporary secular mind is the coming together of seemingly random objects or events, which are isolated and abstracted into a causal chain of events and then bestowed with significance. Grandin (2005) explains that the part of the brain called the neocortex[44] can be seen as an

[42] This is even more interesting when considering recent arguments put forward by the theoretical physicist, Lee Smolin; that the accepted notion that time is an illusion (the block theory of space time) is wrong and that time is real and, in-fact a universal law (see https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44771942 and Smolin (2013) *Time Reborn.*

[43] Dali's Paranoiac- Critical method utilised the brain's ability to make links between objects that have no apparent relationship (see Nadeau,1968, reprinted 1973).

[44] The neocortex is the top layer of the brain where the higher cognitive functions of the brain are located (see Grandin and Johnson, 2005: 52).

'association cortex' allowing humans to make rapid generalisations and connections. It is this tendency to make general connections and actively look for patterns and meaning that can be utilised in the development of creative chance connections. These connections can present new ways to negotiate situations and linking elements together can create new possibilities. The most interesting possibilities come from connecting random and often unrelated elements. This declaration taken from Lautremont's work is a rallying cry for seeking connections between elements, ideas and processes. 'New' ideas are made from creating connections and by linking elements together.

In my teaching, I like to show students an established technique for developing ideas called 'forced relationships'. This involves linking a problem or set of circumstances with something totally random - by picking words from a dictionary or newspaper, for example. The new link between unconnected elements can set off new chains of thought, creating new links and new ways of seeing.

This is not new. A book that I often recommend to students by Advertising Executive, James Webb Young is titled A Technique for Producing Ideas. The book was first published in 1965, is still in print, and sums up this concept succinctly with this quote from the Italian Sociologist, Vilfredo Pareto, '… an idea is nothing more or less than a new combination of old elements' (Pareto in Webb Young 2003: 15).

By understanding this, it is possible to harness the creative juxtapositions and connections that are revealed when one plays with chance. We can utilise the human perception of, and relationship with chance to tap into a creative union between our subjective selves and chance. By doing this one becomes, in a sense, an artist; the raw material being our own self. The player of chance becomes the art object.

Finally, with the potential to engage with chance in this way, it just remains to explore the differing possibilities to discover what works and what does not. There are the traditional methods such as- the *I Ching* and the Tarot. There are also many aleatory techniques and processes that have been developed by artists to help them to escape from habit and repetition and to explore making new creative connections in their practice. It is these aleatory practices that have formed the starting point for my own experiments.

CHAPTER 4: Canned Chance: *The Potential to Commodify Aleatory Processes*

In the previous chapters I have suggested that a) Our reality is not fixed- that it can be changed, b) that chance is personal and subjective, and c) that there are processes that we can use to 'harness' and manipulate chance moments.

My hypothesis is that processes and techniques from aleatory art and aleatory practice can be re-imagined and developed into tools that can be used to affect lives as outlined previously. I also argue that if something is useful, then it has the potential to be commercialised and commodified.

A primary focus of my research project is the appropriation and commodification of these aleatory processes. This chapter will begin by discussing commodification as defined by Marx and go on to examine the Fluxus and Pop Art relationships with consumerism and commodification. It will then set out my views on commodification with particular reference to authenticity and eastern spiritual practice, and then discuss how our late capitalist relationship with commodification and the marketplace make this an excellent vehicle for my ideas.

My background is in commercial art. I trained using the techniques and materials of commercial art and design, I understand the production processes and I am familiar with the techniques and terminologies of copywriting and marketing- it therefore seems natural for me to use the 'tools' of commercial art to express myself. As I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, commercial art is by its nature multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary. My works take inspiration from the world of commerce and consumerism. My works are in turn drawn from my own cultural history; my 1960s childhood, my experiences as a child consumer in a time of novelty and change, and later from my work as a commercial artist in the 1970s. These works, which are re-imagined from the products and novelties of my younger life[45], utilise design sensibilities and materials from commercial

[45] Although these works reference the novelty products of my childhood, I do not see nostalgia as being important here as many of the consumers of my art works will not share my cultural or temporal history. For me, these novelty products are a part of my personal past, and a starting point or catalyst for these particular ideas. Why I used this approach will be discussed at the end of this section.

design and production. They are interventionist, interactive and need to be engaged with and not just viewed. These works can be, and indeed have been exhibited, but I suggest that they do not reach their full potential in the art gallery. Instead, I argue, they are for the street, the office, the train and the home. They should be bought from the supermarket or from *Amazon* or *ebay.*

Marx defined a commodity as, '… in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another' (Marx, 2013:17) and Leys (2012)[46] considers that for something to become a commodity it has to be able to be bought and sold. He uses a useful analogy to explain:

> What makes anything a commodity is the possibility of trading it for profit. Apples grown in someone's back yard are not commodities; apples become commodities only when they are grown for sale. Under capitalism, nothing is produced that can't be sold for profit, so the production of commodities is capitalism's raison d'etre. (Leys, 2012)

Under advanced capitalism, he suggests, commodification expands into every area of social and political life, and that it is now the dominant force underpinning the development of life in 'western' societies. All things and activities are converted into commodities (Leys and Harriss White, 2012).

I recently travelled through Manchester Airport. Before travelling I purchased a Fast-Track ticket for £3.50 that enabled me to bypass the other travellers going through security in a dedicated Fast-Track lane with its own dedicated staff. This ticket enabled me to save around half an hour that I could spend in Starbucks instead of waiting in line with other travellers. I could have also booked Speedy Boarding so that I could board the plane first, and Extra Legroom Seats to have more space than the other passengers…

These are just some examples of the continuing commodification of various aspects of airline travel. The same thing is happening in all commercial relationships. There is continual refinement, creating more opportunities to commodify new aspects. Bourriaud (2002) suggests that before long anything that cannot be commodified will vanish and as Leys

[46] Colin Leys is emeritus professor of political studies at Queen's University, Canada.

(2012) points out, the logical end is the commodification of everything.

Cusack and Digance argue[47] that as individuals identify less as members of particular groups or holders of particular values and more with brands, experiences and lifestyle choices, they are developing a more fluid sense of identity. And that contemporary secular culture views life as a 'pilgrimage of self-discovery and self-fulfilment, albeit one that resembles a touristic journey (2008: 228). The buying of commodities, then, is crucial to the construction and maintenance of what each of us see as our 'self'.

The Commodification of Art:

Dewey (1934) posited that in the past, art was connected to life and living, that it reflected ideas and emotions that were important to society. The compartmentalising of art began with the growth of capitalism, and notions of ownership and status.
In 1972, the art critic John Berger wrote that the National Gallery sold more reproductions of Da Vinci's *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and Saint John the Baptist*, than any other work in their collection. Its fame and the public interest in the painting grew when a buyer offered 2.5 million pounds for it and that after this it was moved to a room on its own and placed behind bullet-proof Perspex. He pointed out that its new impressive status was nothing more than its supposed monetary value. He went on to say that 'The bogus religiosity which now surrounds original works of art (…) is ultimately dependent upon their market value' (Berger, 23: 1972).

Not much has changed over the intervening forty-five years. Paintings by well-known artists command higher and higher sums at auctions that have become spectacles in themselves.

I personally know people who buy and keep work by certain artists, waiting for them to increase in value. There is talk of getting in at the beginning of an artist's career, to maximise the potential profits.

In June 2017, I watched the BBC 2 television coverage of the 2017 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and was struck by the selection process; a panel of 'experts' sat as artworks were

[47] Quoting from Lyon and Heelas in *"Shopping for a Self": Pilgrimage, Identity-Formation, and Retail.*

paraded past them. A nod or a shake of the head elicited either, 'd' or 'x' chalked on the back as the work was passed on for further consideration or rejected outright. The sanctity of the discussions by the presenters, the interviewing of celebrities who had turned up to buy 'art', the stars [this year it was Grayson Perry and Gilbert & George]. This TV coverage reflected a perfect example of the religiosity and elitism of the art establishment at work. I agree with Robert Hughes' quote that 'what strip mining is to nature the art market has become to culture' (Hughes in Gablik, 1991: 146). Although I have exhibited my own work and visited many art galleries, I have never felt comfortable with the conventional art establishment...

According to the art critic, John Walker, all works of art have a monetary value, and that 'Art galleries are simply upmarket shops selling (or exhibiting) luxury goods' (1983). If you visit an art gallery there is nearly always a shop where you can buy copies of the works in the exhibition (fig 5).

Figure 5: Colton, D., 2017. Warhol inspired wooden blocks. Gift Shop, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. [photograph] (private collection).

This has now extended into all kinds of souvenirs; in the *Kunst Museum* in Stuttgart (February 2017) there were David Shrigley dominoes for sale, alongside copies of Tim Ulrich's *Lucy Die* (6 euros) and sets of George Brecht's *Solitaire* cards (48 euros) (fig 6).

Figure 6: Colton, D., 2017. Brecht's Solitaire Cards and Ulrich's Lucky Die. [photograph] (private collection).

In the same month Andy Warhol creative notebooks were on sale in the *Whitworth Art Gallery* in Manchester and in *The Munch Museet* in Oslo (May 2017), amongst Munch trays, spoons, mugs, blankets and calendars there were Munch baby's bibs featuring his famous work, *The Scream* (fig 7).

Figure 7: Colton, D., 2017. Baby Bib. Museum Gift Shop, Munch Museet, Oslo [photograph] (private collection).

Salvador Dali *Melting Time Clocks* were on sale at an exhibition of Dali prints in Dubrovnik in August 2018 (fig 8).

Figure 8: Colton, D., 2018. Dali Melting Time Clock, Divine Worlds Exhibition Shop, Dubrovnik. [photograph] (private collection).

Initially, it was in Dada and later Neo-Dada, the Situationists and the Fluxus movement, with their undermining of the art market processes, that was the original starting point for my experimental practice. Natilee Harren[48] (2012) points out that Fluxus was a critique on the expanding commodification of the art market during the post war economic boom. It was the demand for art from collectors that prompted the creation of art 'multiples' utilising commercial process.

Thomas Kellein explains that the Fluxus works rejected traditional notions of craftsmanship[49] and were often presented as a [50]joke or paradoxical conundrum (fig 9). These works were cheap and often non-functional parodies of ordinary objects that were usually sold for a minimal price, in direct contrast to the sums that 'higher' art commanded (1995: 11). These Fluxus artworks were often sold as artists' multiple editions in exhibitions like *The American Supermarket* at Bianchini Gallery in New York (see Harren, 2012).

[48] Natilee Harren is an art historian and critic and a 2011-2012 Getty Research Institute Predoctoral Fellow.

[49] See IMMA: What is Participatory and Relational Art?

[50] Is this not similar to the Munch *Scream* baby bib?

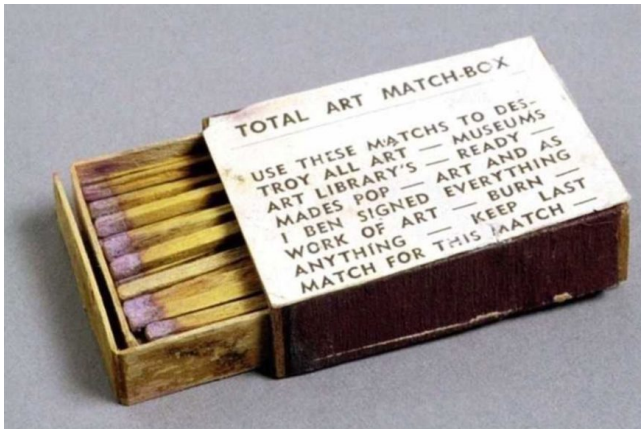


Figure 9: Total Art Match-Box (Museum of Modern Art, New York, c.1965: online).

Kellein suggests that the works that emerged had their roots in Duchamp's readymades, Joseph Cornell's art boxes and the Dada movement. Fluxus was an attempt at transformation through engaging with art, but also a 'deregulation' of art, with the intention of making art available to the masses; for example, George Brecht and Robert Filliou opened an[51] artists' shop to produce and sell artworks. Brecht also believed that his performative scores should be published in newspapers and made available to all. Even so, the Fluxus works, remained largely as art works. The publishing projects, scores, performances and objects were still intended as 'art' or 'anti-art'. These works were making statements and asking questions about the nature of art. Even though they were not sold for large sums of money and were often produced as multiples, they were still largely exhibited or performed in art environments, and they were still part of an art (or anti-art) community and philosophy.

Although my own work is intended to be transformative and could appear to be a parody of commercial products, or as questioning the nature of art, this is not the intention. I suggest that my work *is* commercial. Fluxus works did indeed use the commercial techniques of their time: typography, photography, packaging and print, however, they were never truly commercial. They were not meant for mass production or intended to be distributed through commercial distribution channels or sold in retail outlets. Their 'supermarkets' and 'shops' were still effectively 'art 'spaces.

[51] *La Cédille Qui Sourit* opened in 1965 in Villefranche -sur -Mer in France.

My works are produced using commercial methods (see Methodologies section) but are also intended to be produced in runs of thousands of identical, anonymous products to be sold in retail outlets, in direct contrast to the works created by Fluxus artists which were still primarily art objects.

Many of the Fluxus works were intended to have no viable use. My works have commercial appeal, in that their form *and* function make them commodifiable, they are not just commodified as an artistic statement. Each work links with an aspect of aleatory art practice, but also with a practical use or with a problem that it can solve. They are useful and functional.

Like myself, Cowen (1998) points out that the New York Pop artists of the 1950s and 60s made use of their own commercial backgrounds; a number had been window designers for department stores. Claes Oldenberg had worked in advertising, Andy Warhol had worked in fashion illustration and commercial art. Others had been billboard designers and cartoonists. Andy Warhol [52]explored the notion of commercial design and production as art, with works like his 1962 *Campbell's Soup Cans* and 1964 *Brillo Box.* However, these works appropriated commercially found imagery and explored the nature of art through the *form* of the objects, and not the function. They were largely surface and superficial. These works questioned the nature of art but had no function beyond the gallery space. Although the Fluxus works often had interactive elements (like Brecht's *Event Scores*), they were never intended to become actual commercial objects that moved from the art space to the retail space. Ultimately, they have no function beyond questioning the nature of art; of being works of art. Although my works seem to be superficial and ephemeral they are not. My work has a function, in that it places the consumer into a direct relationship with chance. These works are tools and products for accessing chance.

Even though the commercial as art was originally explored in the examples I have given, and

[52] Warhol ended up as head of a Warhol 'business' with himself as a brand associated with various art 'products'. Even so, the business was always the appropriation and/or production of art (see Walker, 1983).

more recently by artists such as Barbara Kruger, Christian Jankowski, Cildo Meireles[53], Ron English and Shepard Fairey , [54] I propose that commercial art still holds largely untapped potential for my multidisciplinary exploration of concepts that have traditionally been linked to or labelled as 'fine art' Even though my work is presented as a series of commodities, it is still driven by art process. But instead of being presented like works of art in a gallery, it hides within the mainstream consumer market, masquerading as a series of products and novelty items. In this context it is subversive. It proposes that the art gallery is nothing more than a shop. It is also ironic and satirical. Interventionist art is not normally bought from petrol stations, shops and supermarkets and this is the type of retail outlet where my work will be exhibited and sold.

The artist (myself) chooses to remain anonymous; it is intended that the works speak for themselves, pushing the user to participate, to explore, break habits and make changes. Commercial 'mass produced' work is usually anonymous[55]. It is unlikely that anyone buying mass produced products in a supermarket thinks about the designers of the products or the people who produce them. The only connecting or identifiable link between my different works is the name, *Samsara* - the brand name that I have created for the project. As I set out in the introduction, this project is not about branding; the *Samsara* brand name is a catalyst for the works created. It is nothing more, or, if it is, then this is unintentional. I acknowledge that a brand is the 'personality' of a product, or range of products, and that, to the retail buying consumer this is anything but anonymous. But as a creator of art objects, the name *Samsara* is just a unifying (and paradoxical) element of the entire project.

All of the works that I have created (except for the *Instant Karma Scratch Cards*) are for sale, and as such, have a monetary value. As artworks, the intended aim is to introduce the possibility of change through chance; and not about making a profit. The retail market is the 'gallery' or point of contact for the works, and to be able to use this system will incur costs. The decision to charge for the works is practical; firstly, no retailer would give shelf space to

[53] For his 1970 art project; *Insertions into Ideological circuits: Coca-Cola Project*, Meireles removed a number of Coca-Cola bottles from circulation, altered the bottles with political statements and subversive messages, and then put them back into circulation, therefore using the processes of commercial and consumer culture as a vehicle for his art. (See Manchester, E. (2006).

[54] These, and other more contemporary artists will be discussed further in Part Two of this thesis.

[55] Occasionally, the designers of commercial objects do become known for their work, but these are usually 'high end' designers like Jonathan Ive and his work for *Apple*, or James Dyson, for example.

a product that would not pay its way. This return on the space must be considered, and this accounts for a large part of the retail cost of the item. The second reason is for the cost of production itself. Without covering this, another way of funding the project would be needed, such as an arts grant or sponsorship. I see these costs as like an entrance fee for visiting a specialist exhibition at an art gallery. A further aspect for consideration is the normality of paying for products in a retail environment. If, as I have said, the works will hide in the mainstream consumer market, then a monetary value will be part of this too. The cost of each work will be kept to a minimum; covering the retailer's costs and the production costs only.

A further inspiration for these works, and the placing of them in a retail environment, was a magazine concept that I devised in the early nineteen nineties. *Murdertrail* magazine (fig 10) was published between 1991 and 1994. The concept was developed from an idea by the writer, Dennis Wheatley, and the formats of the *Jackdaw* publishing series[56] from the 1970s, and the ITV television series, [57]*Rough Justice.* Later I designed a prototype and set up a publishing company to produce it and I spent the next eighteen months writing, editing and producing nine issues of the magazine. *Murdertrail* was a fictitious police murder case file which could be solved with the help of the information in the form of photos, witness and suspect statements, fingerprints, maps and forensic reports. In a pre-internet age, interactivity was added by an automated phone-line that provided added clues. Later, television formats were developed with Yorkshire TV and Carlton Television. The magazine was publicised in the press and on TV and radio and sold nationally in the UK. Licences were also sold to publishers in Italy, Holland Hungary and Australia.

[56] Jackdaw Publishing created folders of printed source materials on various historical events like the Battle of Waterloo.

[57] An ITV show highlighting miscarriages of justice.

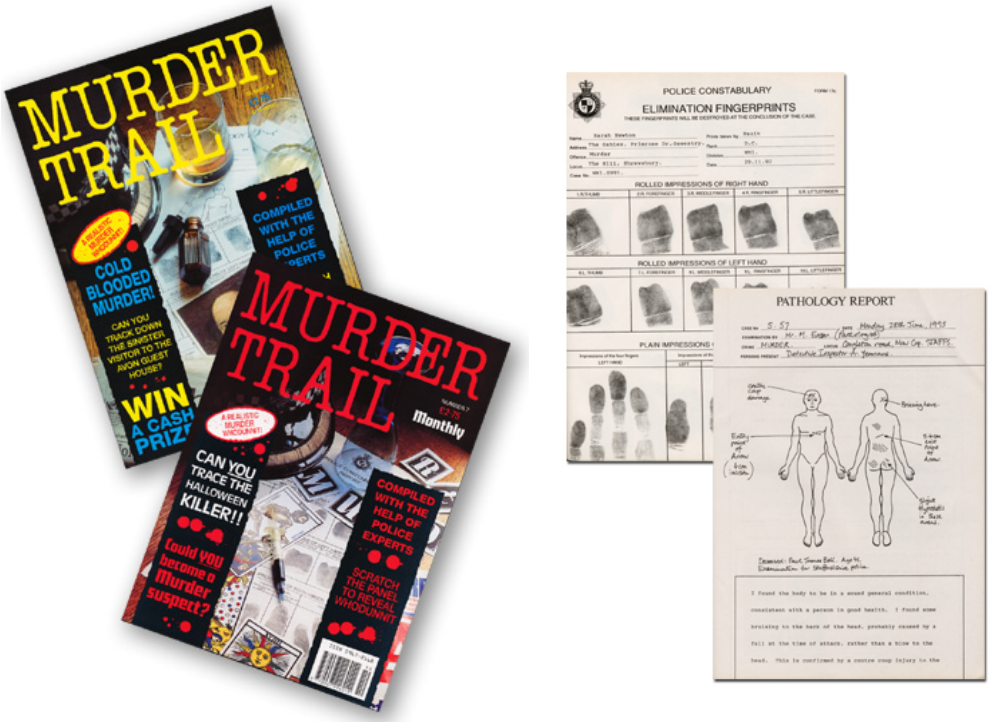


Figure 10: Colton, D., 2015. Murdertrail Magazine [photograph] (private collection).

At the time, I did not see *Murdertrail* as a consumer product, I saw it more as a work of imagination; even an 'art experience'. [58] Although this was the only time that I had created something like this, I had always wanted to explore this synergy between commercial production and imaginative novelty art concepts further. When I began to work on this project, this was the opportunity.

In my former career as a commercial graphic designer I was used to being given a brief explaining the project, the parameters, the timescales and deadlines. When starting work I often began by 'finding a way into the project'. This could be an image, a typeface or a theme which would inspire me and give me a direction. When I began to work on my praxis, the first idea that I developed was the *Karma Kards* (discussed in Chapter 8). When deciding to create a set of cards, I made the connection with the Topps Bubble-gum cards that I had collected as a child as a starting point. I was pleased with the results, so I continued to work in this way. The theme of nostalgia that runs through the project began as a design theme, it was not part of a drive to consciously create nostalgia or influenced by any artists whose

[58] The distribution executive that I dealt with at Comag Magazine Marketing told me it was the first original magazine concept he had seen in 25 years in the publishing business.

work is concerned with nostalgia. However, as the project developed, it became evident that, to an extent, the project was also a personal journey; a critical memoir, and the nostalgic element gave it a continuity - tying it all together. I found an immediate synergy between my ideas on aleatory systems and the consumer novelties from my childhood; the concepts seemed to connect well with my aims. This will be discussed further in the conclusion to this thesis.

As a child I did not visit an art gallery. I had never been to a play or to the opera. I had never read a 'classic' work of literature, and my only experience of classical music was that which was played on the test card before the TV programmes began at lunch time on a Sunday. This was not unusual growing up in my social class in the 1960s and 70s.

My art was the comics and magazines that I bought- The Eagle comic, James Warren's Famous Monsters of Filmland, EC Comics- Tales from the Crypt and superhero comics from Marvel and DC. Then there were the products; Topps' Mars Attacks or American Civil War bubble-gum cards with their lurid colour illustrations, mechanical Daleks, robots, spaceships… There were unusual sweets -Zoom and Mambo ice lollies, and on TV- Fireball XL5, Thunderbirds, Captain Scarlett and Joe Ninety.

Later there was The Monkees, Batman, The Man from UNCLE and The Prisoner. This was my art, and although I now have a wide range of cultural and artistic interests, I still find this cultural world exciting. This 'art' was something that you interacted with; even the TV programmes had spin offs; the toys, costumes, games, cards. You didn't just view it, you lived it. These art works inspired, they moved you and excited you. To me that is what good art should do.

I identify with John Dewey's theories on art; that it is part of life and should be experienced. We have gone beyond the debate on' high' and 'low' art. We no longer take this compartmentalisation for granted. However, despite Dada, Neo-Dada, the Situationists, Fluxus, Pop and Punk, I believe that the art market system absorbs even the wildest ideas; still removes art from life, cutting it off from other aspects of human existence.

For me, art is something that moves me, allowing me to connect with it, something that makes me think, that jolts me to transcend myself in some way. Art has no form, but many forms. For me, life and art are linked- there is no art without life and cutting it out of life kills it...

The Commodification of Belief:

As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, the eastern spiritual practices of Buddhism and Taoism underpinned much of chance art from the Dadaists onwards[59]. The western interest in eastern 'wisdom' and spiritual ideas began in the middle of the last century and has been continued to be linked to the search for spiritual meaning in contemporary secular culture. Indeed, as Said suggests, 'The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences' (Said, 1978: 1). Many aspects of eastern spirituality have now been thoroughly absorbed by contemporary secular culture.

Buddhist teacher and author, Doshim Halaw (2013) writes that the commodification of eastern spirituality began in the 1980s, with neo-liberal economics. Carrette and King suggest that today, in the early 21st century we have, in effect become 'spiritual consumers' (2005:87). We translate eastern spiritual ideas and practices into our modern consumer lives; we selectively appropriate and pick elements, with a disregard or lack of appreciation of the often-holistic nature of these practices. We commodify the parts we like and disregard the rest. Doshim Halaw sees yoga as a good example of commodification. He advocates that yoga has now lost almost all of its spiritual aspects and is now just another fitness craze like aerobics- the brand of yoga is '…hip, fit, sexiness with a hint of spirituality' (2013: 13).

Carrette and King (2005) suggest that today we tend to interpret eastern practices as personal and individual. That modern secular Taoism, for example, takes elements from the traditional holistic religion and makes them into an individualistic spiritual philosophy. They cite numerous self-help books, for example; *The Tao of Golf, The Tao of Motherhood, The Tao of Personal Leadership.* Zen too has become co-opted into the contemporary canon of do- it- yourself spirituality. On Amazon today (13th June 2017) I discovered *Zen Pinball* (a game), *Zen+ Anti-Anxiety supplement, Miniature Zen Garden Set* by *New Age* and *Unisex Ultra Zen Sneakers*. You can also buy 'mindful' dish washing liquid in the form of, *The Ritual of Dao Dish Wash- Bringing peace and tranquillity into your life* (see Rituals.com). According

[59] John Cage was influenced by the ideas of the Zen Buddhist teacher D T Suzuki, and also used the Taoist I Ching to drive his creative work.

to Carrette and King, 'What we have here is the ultimate in the commodification of other people's cultures, available for selective appropriation, repackaging and then reselling' (Carrette and King, 2005: 89). It is clear that eastern spiritualism has been absorbed into contemporary western neo-liberal culture, blurring the lines between what was original and what has been adapted and developed for the consumer market. I would argue that contemporary western versions of yoga, mindfulness and meditation are now fully accepted as part of contemporary secular culture, with only vague links to their eastern origins.

In the contemporary commodification of eastern spiritual practice, it seems that much of the authenticity has been lost. However, as I am going to explain, I do not consider that this is important from a contemporary secular perspective.

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, authenticity is defined as conforming to the original, and reproducing all the essential features (2017, Online). Theo Van Leeuwan [60] suggests that for something to be authentic it must be genuine, and not an imitation or copy; a faithful and accurate historical representation (2001,392) and often bearing a seal of approval or official authorization (2001: 393).

Even so, Van Leeuwan argues that authenticity cannot be seen as objective, and that '… authenticity is relative to norms, the 'norms' associated with the 'social identity or role', and with the 'group, office, category, relationship or association' (2001: 395). In other words, like the contemporary post-modern view of truth, authenticity is in the eye of the beholder. Authenticity and validity change depending on how and where we are viewing them from. I agree with feminist conceptual artist Barbara Kruger when she states that very little in our contemporary secular culture is authentic, and that 'nothing exists outside the marketplace' (Kruger in Gablik, 1991: 146). This is a key point. As Sanderson[61] suggests; 'Across generations and across the world, people are now looking for experiences, services, and products that help them to become better versions of themselves' (*Directions Magazine*, 2018: 53). Lyotard posits that we no longer ask, 'is it true, but what use is it?' (1984:51). And

[60] Emeritus Professor of Linguistics and Visual Communications at the University of Technology, Sidney.

[61] Chris Sanderson is co-founder of *The Future Laboratory.*

in the same way, contemporary secular culture allows for the individual or group to define their own notions of validity. This is no more evident than in the following quote from Ben Pundole, Editor of online travel magazine, *A Hotel Life*:

> I know it's quite a cliché, but just before I turned 40, I decided to change a few things in my life. I started seeing this amazing life coach Gestalt therapist, and this led me to dive into spirituality and literature, sound healing, meditation, as well as all the fun stuff, Burning Man and ayahuasca ceremonies in Peru and so on […] this four-year journey of inner adventure and exploration led to me changing the way I work. (*Directions Magazine*, 2018: 52)

It is difficult to think of an aspect of contemporary secular culture that is not controlled or mediated in some way by the consumer market. Whilst many will mourn the loss of historical authenticity and feel distaste for the ease with which these previously esoteric ideas and practices can now be accessed, I am arguing that consumerism and commodification can still present valuable and life-enhancing experiences. I am not intending to critique or condone consumerism, but I want to acknowledge that it does mediate much of contemporary secular culture and that in some cases, it can still create rich experiences.

As I have already explained, my own early cultural experiences were clearly related to, and mediated by, consumer culture, and that these were often valuable and enriching. I would also argue that an early cultural experience of art galleries and the theatre would still be mediated to an extent by the dominant consumer culture. After all, the art gallery system, displaying and selling 'works of art' that have no 'use value' to those who can afford to view or buy it is the ultimate expression of consumerism.

Critical Framework: Summary

In Chapter 1, I argued that aleatory art processes, that use chance in creating new directions and approaches in art, could be separated out into different categories; and that there is a particular type of aleatory practice that places the artist/audience into a direct relationship with chance which I have called *Aleatorikal*. Through this type of practice, I suggest, chance can be played like music or manipulated like paint.

Chapter 2 discussed how reality is perceived; that individuals live in self-constructed realities that share similarities with those of others but are mainly personal and subjective. As suggested, these realities are not fixed and can be manipulated and changed. I also explained contemporary views on decision making; that decisions are emotional responses to one's perceived reality at a given moment. I suggest that using chance in the decision-making process can free one from the need to control or worry about making what is perceived as the right or perfect decision.

In Chapter 3 I set forth a definition of what chance is, and how it is perceived by and experienced by contemporary secular humans. I also put forward my own insight, garnered from the research that I have done, that chance is the coming together of seemingly random events, which are isolated and abstracted and then bestowed with significance. That, from a human perspective, chance does not exist until we isolate it.

Commodification was discussed in Chapter 4, with particular emphasis on art and eastern spiritual belief systems. I also gave a background to the historic and cultural influences on my own work and explained how my current practice differs from previous attempts to commodify art practice.

My hypothesis is that concepts, methods and techniques can be re-imagined from aleatory art practice, and that these can be developed into tools that can be used to affect lives and

make changes. Physically, these works are novelty- ephemeral and throw-away. But philosophically, they offer access to chance; something that enables the discovery of insights, connection with other realities and the opportunity to explore. I also argue that if something is useful to us then it can be commercialised and commodified, and that, because of this, the consumer retail market is a good place to present my work.

I have explained that previous art movements like Dada, Fluxus and Pop utilised the creation of multiple works and the use of commercial techniques and the commodification of art. I pointed out how although these works used commercial processes, the works were never truly commercial. The work was still made by named artists creating art works that were largely exhibited, or sold in art outlets like galleries, or performed/engaged with by an informed culturally aware 'audience'. Eventually, these artists, their ideas, and their works were re-absorbed or recuperated into the art establishment. Today works by these artists appear in art galleries and have an economic value generated in part by who they were; their contribution, and their involvement with a particular group of artists. My work will be anonymous. My name will not appear on any of the works.

My work is intended for mass production and for distribution across retail outlets. The audience for my work can be anyone who has the inclination to purchase the work. As I suggested earlier, for something to be a commodity it has to be produced to sell in the market. My works will sell in conventional retail markets. The works will be sold for a minimal price, ensuring the greatest potential for uptake by potential consumers. As I have pointed out, all art has a commercial or exchange value that has no bearing on its use value. My works will have an exchange value that largely equates to its production and distribution costs.

The commodification and individualisation of belief and spirituality is a driving force behind my work. Contemporary secular culture presents a world of multiple truths, realities and narratives. If, as I suggest, modern secular individuals live in self-constructed realities that

share similarities with those of others, but are mainly personal and subjective, then it follows that each person will search out that which has meaning for them personally; and this includes the spiritual and the psychological- the things that make each person feel good or validated. An individual will select from the things that they feel express their reality.

My works sell access to chance through the commodification of aleatory art practices. The works create a connection with chance, and this can facilitate exploration and change. The consumer market is my art gallery- the consumer novelties of my childhood are my art:

This thesis is a manifesto for engaging with chance.
I am an artist whose work is chance.
As an artist I choose to remain anonymous, I do not want recognition.
I do not want to exhibit my work; I do not want to be part of the art world.
I do not want to sell my works as works of art.
My art hides in plain sight. It masquerades as novelties and as household products - the works lie buried, waiting for a connection with the consumer.
My art reconnects life with art.
My art connects the commercial with the original holistic function of art.
My art is self-help.
My art has value beyond the aesthetic.
My art is for everyone and anyone who has the inclination to participate.

PART TWO: Practice

In the second part of this thesis there are seven chapters divided into three sections. Each of the works created during this project engage the user with differing aspects of chance, and these will be discussed in the relevant chapters. Each chapter will also include a literature review of the research that relates to each individual work.

Each section deals with a different approach to this engagement with chance. The single work presented in Section 1, although similar to works in Section 2, also deals with the dichotomy between commerce and museology[62] which became apparent after the work was exhibited and feedback given. Section 2 concerns works that use language as a prime device to engage the user with chance; the starting points for these include cut-ups, cards, and ephemera. These works are printed paper and card and are cheap and disposable. Section 3 presents two contrasting works, but also two works that rely on novelty and humour. The first uses modified dice to engage with chance, but in contrast to the works in Section 2, it is intended to become an object of value, a useful and treasured possession. The final work, in contrast to all of the others, in not a tool for engaging with chance, but instead it relies on chance in its discovery. It hides in the retail market waiting to be discovered. It is this chance discovery that makes it an aleatorickal work.

No creative ability is needed to use any of the works effectively. As with all aleatorickal works, they push the user into a direct relationship with chance; one that has the capacity to facilitate insight and change.

[62] The science or profession of museum organization and management (Merriam-Webster).

SECTION 1:

This work stands alone even though, like the works in Section 2, it uses written language to connect the user with the chance experience. The reason is that as the work developed it threw up a dichotomy between its function as a commercial object for sale in the retail market, and its potential as an exhibition piece - in effect, a more conventional piece of fine art. This will be discussed towards the end of this chapter.

Chapter 5: *The Suicide Box - An antidote to the human search for meaning in an indifferent universe*

> Nature never deliberates; it acts directly out of its own heart, whatever this may mean. In this respect Nature is divine. Its 'irrationality' transcends human doubts or ambiguities, and in our submitting to it, or rather accepting it, we transcend ourselves' (Suzuki in Brecht, 1966: 12).

Aims:

My intention here was to create a commercial aleatorickal device that could help people to find meaning in their lives. I wanted to make a chance-driven work that would prompt the user to consider what really matters to them.

There are three different aspects to this work. The design, which was influenced by Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies*. The philosophical methodology which was inspired by Brecht's *Event Scores*. And the ontological aspect that was driven by Franckl's[63] *Logotherapy*, the works of the writer, Graham Greene and the writer and philosopher Albert Camus.

According to D T Suzuki (1949), the acceptance that all life is transient is one of the central concerns of Buddhist philosophy. When we realise and understand that life is temporary, and that we have very little control over what happens, we can begin to evaluate what is important to us. My aim was to use chance to re-kindle a joy for life- as if each day was

[63] Viktor Franckl (1905-1997) was professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Vienna Medical School. He was also the founder of *Logotherapy,* a method of analysis that is based on man's search for meaning.

going to be our last. To create an aid to mindfulness that would help us to re-evaluate what is important.

New Perspectives and Insights:

The *Suicide Box* is an aid in the search for personal meaning, commodified into a contemporary commercial product. The box develops and combines the aleatory works of Eno, Schmidt and Brecht and the philosophical ideas of Franckl and Camus. This commodification of philosophical ideas and aleatory practice has the potential to enable users to find meaning in their lives through an original commercial product.

Enquiry:

The *Suicide Box* was created as a response to Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies* cards. Although the format was taken from Eno and Schmidt's cards (the black box and white cards), as the work developed it became clear that the methodological aspect was inspired by a forerunner of the *Oblique Strategies*; George Brecht's *Event Scores*. These were a series of cards on which were written cryptic lists of words or instructions. According to Ouzounian, 'Brecht conceived of his work as 'structures of experience'; a method of the meaning inherent in human experience (2011: 207).

Brecht's philosophy was that chance or aleatory methods not only create artistic possibilities, but also metaphysical ones, as the works allow the artist; '… to transcend personality, culture and, ultimately, self' (Brecht in Ouzounian, 2011: 207).
In 1963, George Brecht's *Event Scores* were published as the *Water Yam* box (fig 11). The box initially contained 77 cards with printed instructions for different activities (Radio 3, 2005: Online). Like Cage, Brecht was influenced by the Zen teachings of D T Suzuki. In Zen, the self that transcends itself, that realises the non- existence of a separate self, achieves enlightenment. Brecht's aim was to attempt to facilitate this state through aleatory art practice. His intention was to make us realise our connection to the universe and our place

in it. The *Event Scores* were an attempt to enable a kind of enlightening or transcendent experience; the aim being that by focusing on a selected fragment of experience as a minimalistic performance piece, an indeterminate *moment* or *event*, the unified nature of reality would be revealed.

Figure 11: Water Yam (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1963: online).

Brecht's random prosaic instructions facilitated the kind of ideas-driven conceptual performance pieces that developed into the conceptual works of the 1960s, for example, one card, entitled *For a Drummer, Fluxvision 2,* instructed that the 'Performer drums with sticks over a leaking feather pillow, making the feathers escape the pillow' (Dayal, 2010: 20). As I have already stated, it is the performer who is affected by the *Event Score*, and not the observer. It is the act of engaging with the work that facilitates the experience.

I wanted to explore this idea as I was particularly interested by the notion that the instructions on a card could have such a profound effect. Brecht's aim was to facilitate an enlightenment through chance; to make us realise that we are not separate, but part of a universal whole. In my project, my aim was to use Brecht's concept to connect the user with the 'real' meaning in their life.

Franckl explains that *Logotherapy* is, 'meaning-centred psychotherapy'. He had observed that many psychological problems were due to 'existential frustration' and that *Logotherapy* could help patients take responsibility for finding their own life's meaning (1946, reprinted

2002: 104). As such, Crumbaugh and Maholick define logotherapy as '… an application of the principles of existential philosophy to clinical practice' (1964: 200).

In the preface to the 2004 edition of Frankl's book; *Man's Search for Meaning*, Allport[64] writes; '[Franckl] sometimes asks his patients who suffer from a multitude of torments great and small, 'Why do you not commit suicide?' From their answers he can often find the guide-line for his psychotherapy…' (Allport in Franckl, 2004: 7). Franckl was trying to discover what gave the patient's life meaning, and then use this to help them overcome their torments. The writer Graham Green used a similar approach to jolt himself out of his depressions. As a young man he discovered that to play Russian roulette with a loaded pistol made him '… enjoy again the visible world by risking its total loss' (see Greene, 1971: 94). There is evidence to show that the prospect of an imminent death or a life-threatening illness can focus the mind and reconnect people with a joy for living (see Young, W., Nadarajah, S., Skeath, P., & Berger, A. 2015). And as Steve Jobs[65] said in his address to students of Stanford University in 2005:

> … remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart… (Jobs, 2005:10 min 01)

The notion of understanding our place in the universe, that our time is limited and that we should take responsibility for how we live, and what we live for, is an important part of this work. Sartre (1938) argued that we are free and that how we live is our own responsibility and Camus (1942) posited that life has no inherent meaning and that human freedom comes from the acceptance of this - that all human existence is absurd and that we should commit 'philosophical suicide' and just accept it (1942, reprinted 2005: 39). As my work resonated with these philosophical ideas, I thought about taking Camus's comment literally and decided to utilise the notion of suicide as a driver for the project.

I realised that there would be many ethical issues involved in creating a project about suicide. I knew that it would be very difficult to make something like this acceptable in a

[64] Gordon Willard Allport (1897-1967) was an American psychologist.

[65] Steve Jobs was one of the founders of *Apple.* Jobs died in 2011.

commercial sense. However, I did not expect the reactions that I received to what was a model of an idea and at this stage, a mock-up. These will be discussed later in the chapter.

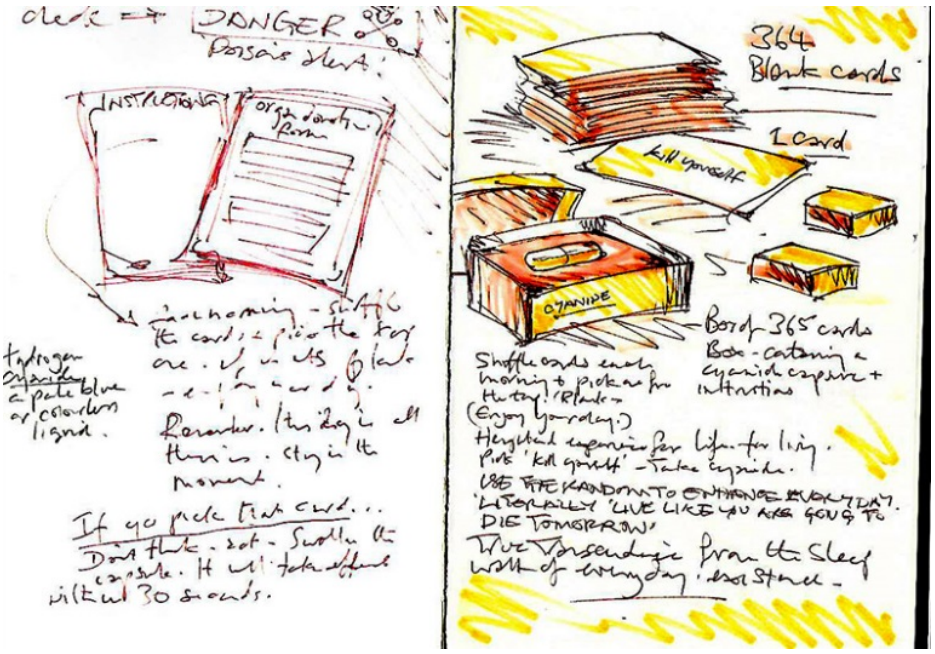


Figure 12: Colton, D., 2014. The Suicide Box – Drawings from notebook. [scan] (private collection).

Taking from Brecht's 'structures of experience, *The Suicide Box* (fig 12) presents the user's death as a possible event- the ultimate experience. The format is adapted from Eno and Schmidt; a small plain black box containing a set of one hundred white cards (fig 13). All of them are blank except one. There are also two larger cards; one is an organ donor registration form, the other carries the instructions for engaging with the work itself (fig 14). Each morning, the participant shuffles the pack and picks a card at random. If it is blank, then the artwork is put away until the next morning. In the event of picking the one card that isn't blank, the participant must follow the command to commit suicide. This is done with the enclosed cyanide capsule. The instructions are to lie down and swallow the capsule with a glass of water. By using the *Suicide Box*, the user is, in effect, like Greene, playing 'Russian roulette'. Their existence is reduced to a two-word instruction on a card. Each day could, literally, be their last.

Figure 13: Colton, D., 2015. The Suicide Box [photograph] (private collection).

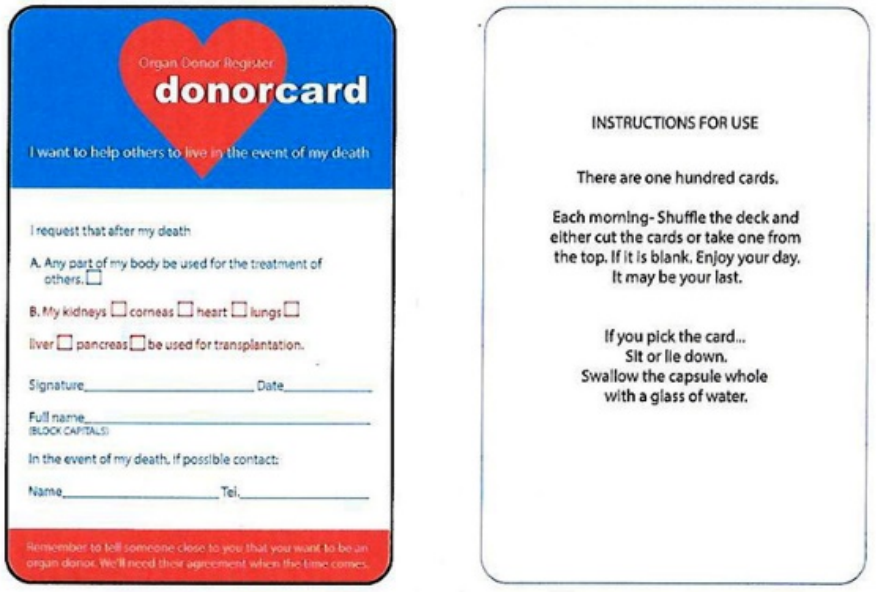


Figure 14: Colton, D., 2015. Donor Card and Instruction Sheet. [photograph] (private collection).

There is a 1/100 chance of an imminent death on each day that the pack is shuffled, and a card picked from the deck, unless the participant picks a card from the top of the pack; one each day, without shuffling- then there is a maximum of one hundred days from the start of

the process.

I wanted to achieve a measured and indifferent approach to the art work (like the *Oblique Strategies*). I felt that the cold functionality of the design and the formal language of the writing added to the sense of trepidation and atmosphere. This was also the case with the organ donation form, which emphasises the seriousness of interacting with the work.

I asked myself, what would it feel like to thoroughly commit? To flip a card each day, knowing that there was a chance that this could be my last? Would the Suicide Box empower me to make the most of my time if I knew I might only have one day left? As Franckl posited, would the question of suicide focus my mind on what matters to me- what I feel is really important in my life?

If the box contained real cyanide, the *Suicide Box* would be a very powerful, controversial (and illegal) work. At this time, due to ethical concerns, it would have no possibility of becoming a commercial product. However, I wondered if it could still work if the cyanide was a placebo. The 'cyanide crystals' in the current prototype are granulated sugar crystals[66]. Showing the prototype artwork to people exposed another element which I didn't expect; that some people handling it believed the cyanide *was* real. My conclusion was that the perceived availability of unlicensed illegal drugs and medicines via the *Tor Browser* or *Dark Web* had some effect. Nevertheless, I wanted to find out if the user knew the cyanide wasn't real whether the idea would still work.

I did try using the *Suicide Box* over a few days myself and although this was not the terrifying experience it could have been, it still did focus my thoughts. I did not feel the '… extraordinary sense of jubilation' (1971: 94) that Greene experienced when the pistol he was pointing at his head clicked and he knew he had beaten the odds, but there was still a 'thrill' when the card was blank. I think this is where it would work as a commercial product - as a novelty, but also an alternative tool for provoking mindfulness- focusing the mind in the moment, or as Jobs advocated, 'Remembering that *you* [my italics] are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose…' (2005, 10

[66] Through research I discovered that sugar looks exactly like potassium cyanide crystals

min 01).

However, due to the reactions I received it was possible that this was still too controversial to be sold as a product, even as a non-functioning aid to mindfulness.
From the feedback I had had from the exhibition visitors who viewed the box, and thinking about Jobs' quote earlier in this chapter, I also questioned whether this work even needed to be interacted with to be effective. I considered whether seeing it in an exhibition would still have a similar effect - whether just looking at it could facilitate one to imagine using it, so I set out to experiment. I encased the pack and contents in a solid wooden box with thick glass on the front. I added bolts to seal it and added safety signs warning of the dangerous nature of the exhibit as I wanted the framing and presentation to add something more to the original concept (fig 15).

Figure 15: Colton, D., 2016. The Suicide Box Exhibition Presentation image. [photograph] (private collection).

The first showing was as part of the School of Art end of year exhibition at the University of Wolverhampton in September 2016. In November 2016 I also exhibited the box as part of the MMU Cheshire *Words at Play* event. At both events I discussed the box with visitors and was surprised at the response. A few people appeared to be disturbed by the work and one person that I spoke to did believe that the cyanide was real, explaining that the warning stickers and the sealed nature of the exhibit led him to believe this. He thought that the stickers had been put on by the University.

I created the *Suicide Box* in early 2015, and it was one of my first attempts at developing an object for accessing chance[67]. I found the process useful in that by making the object I was able to get feedback on my ideas and contextualise some of my research. I had many interesting responses, ranging from humour to real trepidation or even repulsion. It was useful to note that even though the cyanide was not real, people who engaged with it still found it disconcerting- it did not matter that it was a mock-up. It was the *potential* of the object and what it symbolised that affected them. I began to realise that although my works are essentially interactive, they did not have to be interacted with to have an emotional effect on the viewer. This was further re-enforced when In December 2016, I saw an exhibit in the *Dreaming out Loud- Designing for Tomorrow's Demands* exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. The exhibit was entitled *The In-Vitro Meat Cookbook* (fig 16).

[67] Later I discovered that the artist, Ben Vautier had created *A Flux Suicide Kit* in 1967. A box comprising of a shard of glass, matches, a razor, an electrical plug with a frayed cord, a fishhook and nails. The box design and graphics were also designed by Vautier.

Figure 16: Colton, D., 2016. The In-Vitro Meat Cookbook. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. [photograph] (private collection).

The book was exhibited in a glass case with only the cover visible- a sub- heading on the cover read 'a bizarre cookbook from which you cannot cook' (Van Mensvoort & Grievink, 2014). The book was, in this instance, intended as an exhibit, and according to the label next to the work, it was created to prompt us to think of a future where the meat we eat would be grown in a laboratory. Although I later discovered that the book was real, could be bought on *Amazon,* and contained content that explored the issues surrounding lab grown meat, I was intrigued by the way it had been exhibited. The 'object' worked in the context of the exhibition, without the viewer being able to open it or read it. I suggest that the *Suicide Box* does work in a similar way, in that it does not have to be interacted with to have a strong emotional effect on the viewer. It would, therefore, be thought-provoking to continue to present the *Suicide box* as an exhibition piece.

I did exhibit other works too: the *Karma Kards* (see Chapter 8) the *Commuter Curve-ball Cards* (see Chapter 9), and the *Zen Mop* (Chapter 11). Doing this confirmed that, although they are meant to be interacted with, these works also have some impact in the context of an exhibition, in that they provoked interest and discussion.

At this current stage, the *Suicide Box* is effectively a thought experiment, but it is still the most controversial work that I have attempted as part of this PhD project. As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, due to ethical concerns, there would be no chance of the box, with real cyanide, becoming a commercial product[68]. As I have suggested, it could be exhibited. However, this project is about creating anonymous works that are to be made available as products in the retail market and to exhibit them is not the intention.

The *Suicide Box,* therefore, could still be produced and sold as a non -working item: as a thought experiment for realising the finite nature of life, and an aid for helping to focus the user's mind on what matters to them, and what gives their lives meaning. I suggest that doing this, and selling the boxes on the internet, would be the most effective way of making and distributing the *Suicide Box.*

[68] In a postscript to this chapter, In November 2017 I discovered that Dr Philip Nitschke, the founder of the euthanasia advocacy group, *Exit International,* has recently developed a 'suicide machine' called the *Sarco Capsule*, which he says will allow anyone to die 'peacefully and reliably' with the push of a button. The machine, which is intended to be 3D printed, uses liquid nitrogen to reduce the oxygen level inside the capsule, causing a peaceful death within minutes. Afterwards, the capsule can be detached and used as a coffin (Peaceful Pill, 2017: Online). The capsule doesn't use anything illegal like banned drugs, and according to Nitschke, it is apparently legal to enter the capsule and end your own life. With his intention to make the 3D printer plans available on the internet in 2018, and a predicted printing cost of around £900, the commodification of suicide does not look far off (3ders.org, 2018: Online).

SECTION 2:

The works included in Section 2 are primarily driven by written language; in that, they use words to explain how the work is to be used and use words to mediate the user's interaction with chance. These works are all printed on card or paper using commercial processes. They are meant to be ephemeral and temporary.

Chapter 6: *Raw Words*

Aims:

My initial investigation into textural cut-ups uncovered a two-hundred-and-fifty-year history of the practice, which included a cut-up bible created by the third American President, Thomas Jefferson[69], the poetry of Tristan Tzara and the work of the Dadaists and Surrealists. I wanted to explore whether it would be possible to re- imagine the practice in a form that could be commodified.

As a starting point, I was drawn to Tzara's claim that one could write a poem purely by picking words at random from a bag and I wanted to investigate this.
I was also intrigued by the cut-up experiments of the writer, William S Burroughs and the artist Bryon Gysin[70], and principally their experiments with the quality of cut-ups, and their proposition that cutting up texts could allow one to 'collaborate' with the writer(s) of the original works.

New Perspectives and Insights:

Raw Words explores the commodification of the cut-up technique. Experimentation has developed an entirely new cut-up work that encapsulates the theories and ideas of previous artists and presents them to a new audience. My investigations and original research have led to a new method of creating cut-ups, one which appropriates the appropriators of

[69] Jefferson cut out the parts of the bible that he didn't agree with and reassembled it into a new one. One of these cut-up bibles was exhibited at the Smithsonian Museum of American History in 2012.
[70] The artist Bryon Gysin was Burroughs' friend and collaborator on a number of cut-up experiments.

language, repositioning the ideas of Duchamp, Tzara, Burroughs and Gysin. *Raw Words* enables 21st century writers (and non-writers) to buy a product that countenances a collaboration between themselves and other established writers in the creation of their own new works. *Raw Words* opens up the writing of poetry to anyone, regardless of their level of skill.

Enquiry:

This chapter documents my experiments with cut-ups, and my attempt to create a viable commercial cut-up product; *Raw Words.*

> In 1920, Tzara famously declared:
>
> To make A Dadaist poem
> Take a newspaper.
> Take a pair of scissors.
> Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
> Cut out the article.
> Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
> Shake it gently.
> Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order which they left the bag.
> Copy conscientiously.
> The poem will be like you.
> And here you are a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.
>
> (Tzara in Motherwell[71], 1951, reprinted 1979: 92)

As already discussed in Chapter 1, the method Tzara used here was to pick the cuttings totally at random, without any conscious input. Random word combinations can suggest new ideas, but I wanted to discover how well this would work without some input from the artist (also discussed in Chapter 1). I wanted to explore if and how I could commodify the cut-up, and an initial idea had been to parody Tzara, and cut up a page of text, put the individual words in bags, and sell them as tools for creating poems. Later, I read some of the poetry that he created using this method (see Motherwell, 1979) and found it difficult to read. I also considered it to have little or no artistic merit, but I wanted to try the technique

[71] There are many versions of this declaration, both in print and online. They are all similar in intention but vary slightly in the language. Through the various translations, it is hard to determine which version is the most accurate. in the critical framework I referenced Richter's personal interpretation, however, here I use Motherwell's own translation from the French from 1951.

out for myself to see if it would reveal anything that I might be able to use.

I created two short works (see fig 17) and inspired by Burroughs and Gysin, (who moved from newspaper cut-ups to Rimbaud and Shakespeare). I decided, instead, to start with Shakespeare and *the Sun* newspaper to see whether the difference in writing quality would have a bearing on the end result.

The 'poem' on the left is taken from a hundred words of King Richard's monologue from *Richard III* and the one on the right, from one hundred words of copy cut from an article about the celebrity chef Gordon Ramsey in *the Sun* newspaper. They were both created by randomly selecting approximately 25 words from the text and placing them down exactly in the order that they appeared (as suggested by Tzara in 1920).

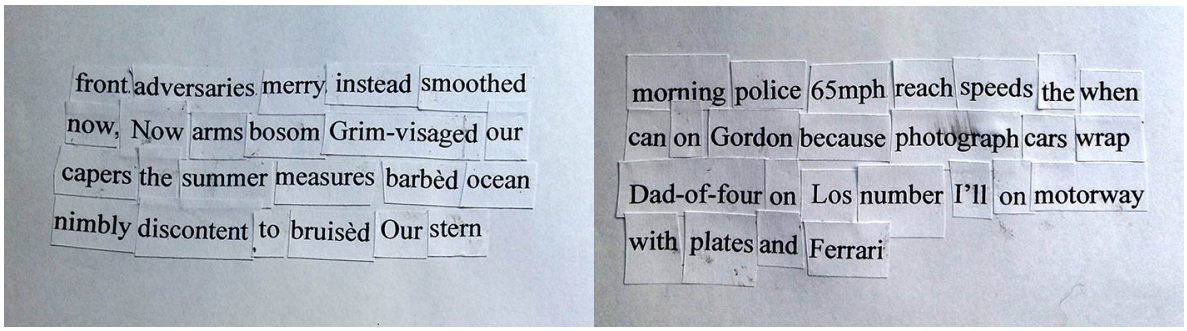


Figure 17: Colton, D., 2016. Cut-up experiment number 1. [photograph] (private collection).

Neither of these poems presented interesting imagery or possessed any aesthetic or artistic merit beyond the experimental. They highlight Harris' earlier point (Chapter 1) that Tzara's[72] 'poem' was not really a serious suggestion but an '… ironic, anti-aesthetic manifesto stratagem, a performance trick rather than a creative blueprint' (2005). The problem with cutting up individual words is that you lose the sentence structure, so it is only occasionally that the juxtapositions of the words cut up like this, present anything useful in this context.

[72]Tzara's later cut-up poems contain some fascinating images (*my favourite- 'two smiles meet towards the child-wheel of my zeal'*) Caws explains that Tzara used a rage of techniques to develop these works which I suggest were very similar to the ones used later by David Bowie (see Caws, 2005).

According to Edward Robinson[73], Burroughs' and Gysin's cut-up methods differed from this one. Their first cut-up pages were made from a random mix of newspapers and magazines. Their favourite technique was to cut an article into four sections, re-join them in a different sequence and then search for interesting new clusters and phrases. They found that despite being removed from the original context, the 'raw words' could be ordered to create surreal and intriguing images, that considering '… their lack of connection, combined curiously well, and reveal a great deal about the source materials' (Robinson, 2011: 25). Burroughs' biographer, Barry Miles, explains that they discovered that with their process, the quality of the original text effected the quality of what could be achieved. They progressed from cutting up magazines and daily newspapers to texts by Rimbaud and Shakespeare, and they commented that '… the results showed a marked improvement' (Miles, 2014: 363).

I cut up *the Guardian* newspaper (12th June 2014) which I felt had a level of journalistic quality that should reveal useful imagery. I folded it up and then cut random sections out with a scalpel. I then shook the folded newspaper and picked up the scattered words and phrases from the table. I noticed that many of the small clusters that I had excised related to police investigations, court cases and child abuse; themes that were much in the news at the time.

Following this, I cut random pages from the popular Women's magazines, *Take a Break* and *Closer* (June 2014) which I put horizontally through a shredder. I picked lines of text and combining these into images and short narratives, but, like Burroughs and Gysin, (see Miles, 2014) I noted the lack of depth and quality that it was possible to achieve. The text was limited in its vocabulary and the cut-ups revealed a preoccupation with celebrity and weight loss. As I progressed through cutting headings from *the Daily Mail* and *the Sun* (June 2014) I noticed, like Burroughs and Gysin, that the 'quality' of the original text and the extent of its vocabulary had a direct bearing on what it was possible to achieve through this technique. This issue also affected my *Luckybag of Life* and I found that I had to experiment quite a few times before I achieved a collection of words of a quality that was good enough

[73] Robinson is the author of *Shift Linguals* (2011), an analysis of Burroughs' cut-up narratives.

to use (see Chapter 7).

As suggested in Part One of this thesis, one of Burroughs' insights was to see that we perceive our environment as fragmentary, that we have multiple viewpoints and our attention does not follow a simple cause and effect process. Robinson suggests that the fragmentary nature of the narrative is key to how cut-ups work. The random cut-up fragments 'reflect the way that memory functions, jumping from one thought or recollection to the next on the impulse of random triggers' (Robinson, 2011: 47). I decided to try 'cutting' fragments of text from the masses of textual information that I am exposed to each day, with the intention of manipulating the fragments and the connections between them. The tool I used to do this was the camera.

I photographed adverts in magazines and newspapers, street signs, rubbish on the pavements, slogans on vehicles, information signs at the train station and in shops.
I experimented with different textual groupings and narratives that I could link together or rearrange (fig 18). Cut-ups like these can unearth new ideas from the familiar and these new ideas and images are easy to interpret as they still follow the syntax and structure of a language.

Figure 18: Colton, D., 2015. Cut-up experiment number 2. [photograph] (private collection).

that we are used to. However, they do present new interpretations of the original, allowing us to 'see into' the original text through an alternative window. The images in figure 18 are a good example of this. These groupings unearthed useful ideas and starting points that could be used for developing new narratives.

Rock musician and artist David Bowie's technique varied from that popularised by Burroughs and Gysin. According to Doggett, the primary source for Bowie's lyrics during the *Diamond Dogs* sessions was a collection of notebooks, in which he had written hundreds of phrases and lines. Flashes of inspiration were recorded there, alongside images borrowed from books, TV advertisements, even the labels stuck on the Olympic Studios mixing consoles (Doggett, 2011: 200). Bowie cut up these notebooks (or copies of them) into strips and then reassembled them like a jigsaw to create the images for the songs[74] (see BBC, 2013, Online: 3mins. 55). I am an admirer of the imagery that Bowie created through this process and felt that accessing rich imagery like this would be a good starting point if I was going to create a viable cut-up product.

I chose three books that, in their subject matter, contained the type and quality of imagery I was looking for; *The Golden Bough* (1950) by James Frazer (a collection of magical folklore) *Laurie Anderson* (2000) by Rose Lee Goldberg and *Low* (2005) by Hugo Wilcken, a book about David Bowie's *Low* album. I applied a version of the medieval practice of Bibliomancy,[75] scanning the pages at random until a word or cluster of words resonated with me. I then copied these out until I had filled a page in my notebook. At this point I shaped them into poems by cutting up and arranging the phrases and in some cases, adding extra words that seemed to fit (fig 19). [76]

[74] *Two of my favourite Bowie lyrics from Diamond Dogs- 'But there's a shop on the corner that's selling papier-mâché, Making bullet-proof faces; Charlie Manson, Cassius Clay' and 'but I love you in your fuck-me pumps, and your nimble dress that trails'.*

[75] Divining the future by picking and interpreting words or passages from a book, especially the bible.

[76] This was like the process that John Cage had used to create *Quartet* (1935). See Chapter 1.

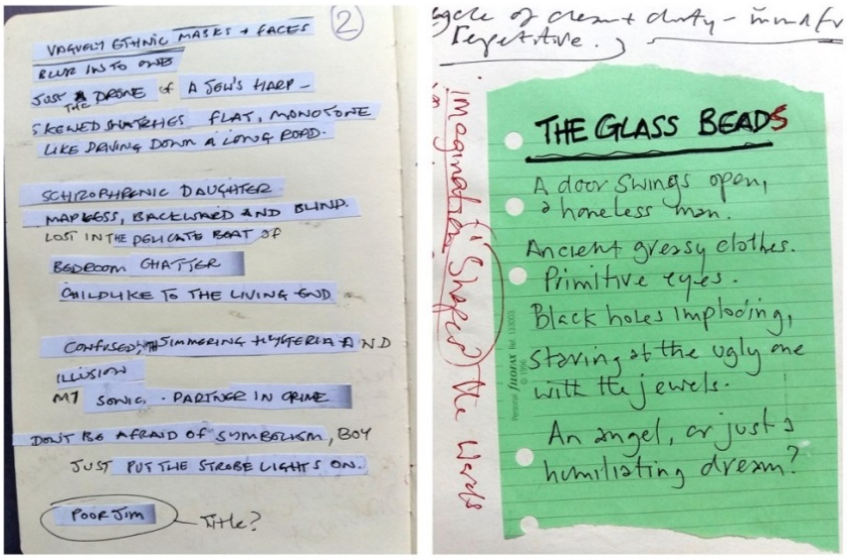


Figure 19: Colton, D., 2015. Cut-up experiment number 3, collage/ notes from notebook [scan] (private collection).

I illustrated some of the poems, see *the Public Magician* (fig 20) and *the Rollicking Pleasures of the Chair* (fig 21). This was a very useful process for me as it was the first time I had seriously attempted to write poetry and I was very satisfied with the quality of the texts that I was able to achieve. I felt that the textual poems contained strong imagery that I could easily translate into visual images. These experiments with cut-ups had prompted my creative process in the search for creative chance connections, and it was this insight that I took forward and used in the *Raw Words.* As I explained in Chapter 3, by linking elements together, we create new possibilities and explosive new possibilities can come from connecting 'random' elements. I would even argue that cut-ups can trigger creative leaps that can make using words extraordinary.

Burroughs and Gysin also suggested that by cutting up and rearranging the work of a particular writer you became a collaborator in the new work. English artist, Tom Phillips begun working on cut-ups after reading an interview with William Burroughs in the 1965 edition of the *Paris Review.* His work, *A Humument,* grew out of a book called *A Human Document* by one W H Mallock, which Phillips found in a second- hand bookshop, and heavily redacted in a version of the cut-up technique, but with drawings and coloured patterns. *A Humument* became a new book, a strange mix of pictures, patterns, phrases and

narratives which Phillips described as '… a curious unwitting collaboration between two ill-suited people seventy-five years apart' (Phillips, 1980, reprinted 2005: 372).

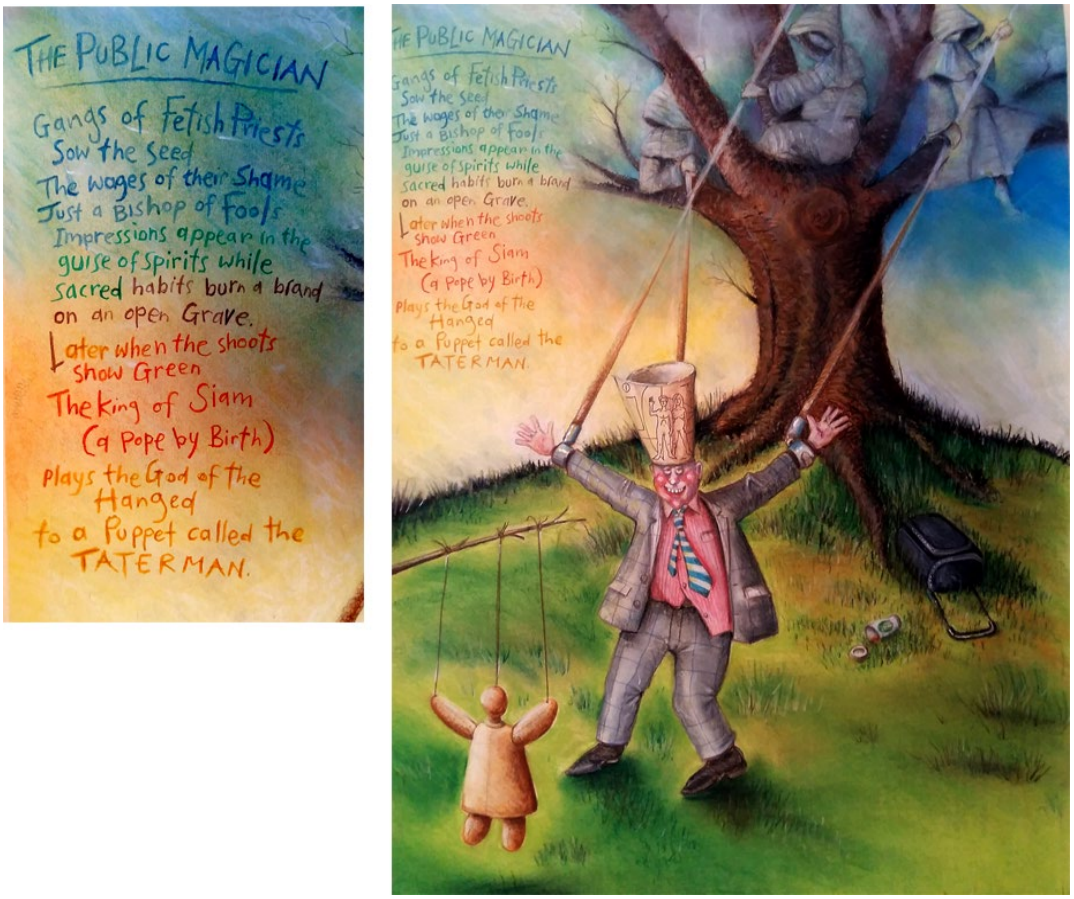


Figure 20: Colton, D., 2015. The Public Magician. Ink, pastel/Conte Crayon. [scan] (private collection).

I was intrigued by an 'unwitting collaboration' and the notion that, if we wish, we can in-fact collaborate with anyone who has produced a piece of work, and the cut-up is an expedient method of doing this. As Burroughs remarked, 'A page of Rimbaud cut up and rearranged will give you quite new images- real Rimbaud images- but new ones…' (Burroughs in Miles, 2014: 363). It was this that led me to the realisation that I could create a product that would act as a catalyst between the original work or works and an entirely new one.

Figure 21: Colton, D., 2015. The Rollicking Pleasures of the Chair. Pastel/Conte Crayon, collage. [scan] (private collection).

Another discovery was the artist Bill Drummond, best known, along with his partner, Jimmy Cauty as the electronic band, [77]*the KLF*. They had numerous hit records in the late 80s and early 90s, including *Doctorin' the Tardis* (as the *Timelords*) which reached the UK number 1 spot in 1989. This track was essentially a cut-up or mash-up of the *Doctor Who* TV theme, *Blockbuster* by *the Sweet* and *Rock n Roll (Part Two)* by *Gary Glitter.*

In their 1988 book, *The Manual,* Drummond and Cauty suggest that anyone can have a number 1 record by following a straight forward process. They argue that all number 1

[77] Later, Drummond and Cauty re-invented themselves as the *K Foundation*, a situationist/radical art group, and became infamous for burning one million pounds at a remote location in Scotland, citing it as an art project (see Brook & Goodrick,1997).

songs are made up from parts of other songs, and that there is no point searching for originality, just find songs you like, cut them up, mix them and re-arrange into a new song. If you have anything original in you then it will shine through the component parts (see KLF, 1988).

Barthes[78] explains that a text (and I would include the song), ' … is made of multiple writings drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation…' (Barthes, 1977, reprinted 1990: 148) any song is made up of what has gone before, and as I have already argued, new directions come from new and previously untested connections. I agree that if you take commercially successful songs and combine the 'successful' parts into new songs, then they should, in theory, also appeal to the same market. However, I argue that the contribution of the artist is important in a process like this, as I discussed in Chapter 1.

Joseph Kosuth's 1993 artwork *Double Reading 12#* comprised of a cartoon and a quote, placed together on the gallery wall. According to Kosuth, the 'artwork' is the juxtaposition of the two elements and how they relate to one-another. Neither are works by the artist. Instead, he says, his work is the gap between them '…where the surplus meaning is created from those two' (Kosuth in Convery, 2017: online). When Drummond and Cauty attempt to create a successful commercial song, it is their contribution as artists that is just as important as the elements they used. As I explained in Chapter 1, when using chance primers, some creative ability is needed to create art works of quality, whether these are songs, poems or images. This is also the case with any form of cut-up. If the user has the ability to make interesting or thought-provoking connections between elements, then this will create more interesting work.

However, the *Raw Words* are a commercial product and the quality of the final work will depend on the ability of the user; but as with any form of creative process or tool, the final results are determined by the person who creates the work. For example, anyone can buy a camera and take photographs, but in the hands of a talented photographer, the camera can

[78] See Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (1967).

create works of real quality. This does not stop lesser talented people taking photographs[79]. This is also the case with the *Raw Words.* They are a tool for creating poetic images and that is all. The talent of the user is not important in the engagement with the product.

The Process:

The *Raw Words* developed from these initial experiments and my insights; that cut-ups can prompt useful random connections; that the quality of a cut-up is largely determined by the choice of original text, the person doing it, and the technique used to cut it up. That we can collaborate with quality writers and great works of art using cut-up techniques, and that anyone can do this. It is also the case that cutting up texts can create some excellent, high quality textual images. From these findings I wanted to determine whether I could create a viable cut-up product that one could use to create poetry.

I named the work *Raw Words* as Bryon Gysin had referred to the initial texts used in his and Burroughs' cut-ups as 'raw words' (Gysin and Wilson, 1982 reprinted 2012: 44) and had suggested that 'the cut-up method treats words as the painter treats his paint' (Gysin, 2012: 45)- that the words themselves were a raw material. My 'raw words' themselves were taken from *The Waste Land* by T S Elliot (1922) [80], and Burroughs' *Nova Express* (1964). Both texts were originally created using cut-up techniques and contained the kind of rich imagery I wanted to use. I decided to cut up prose rather than poems as it gave a greater range and number of words to choose from[81].

I selected passages at random from both original works, mixed them together and then fed them through an on-line 'Cut-up Generator' (see: http://www.lazaruscorporation.co.uk /cutup/text-mixing-desk). The resulting text was an amalgam of both works. These were then printed onto one-meter long paper strips of paper (in a homage to Duchamp's *3*

[79] It is also possible to buy *Fridge Fonts*. Magnetic letters to spell out messages on the fridge, such as shopping lists. These, like *Scrabble* letters could be used to create poems, however, this is not different from the process of writing poems – just a different medium.

[80] Burroughs called *The Waste Land* '…the first great cut- up collage' (Vernon, 1972:116).

[81] I did try combining conventional writing instead of cut-ups; *Strands* (2012) by Jean Sprackland and *Findings* by Kathleen Jamie (2005). I attempted a nature poem. I did work quite well, but I needed more than one pack of *Raw Words*. I discovered that the cut-ups provide a more disjointed or fractured narrative and that this works better in this context.

Standard Stoppages, discussed in Chapter 1) and two random pieces were included in each pack (fig 22).

Figure 22: Colton, D., 2016. Raw Words Image 1. [photograph] (private collection).

The Product:

The packaging was developed from a childhood memory of cap guns. I wanted to create something like the rolls of caps used with toy pistols, as I liked the process of unrolling the strips of words and the memory of this image had presented itself. Caps were packaged in a tiny round cardboard box containing a long strip of grey dotted light blue paper with the maker's stamp on the lid (fig 23). These were a common feature in a boy's life in the 1960s, but they are no longer available in this form today. Attempts to create my own small papier-maché boxes were a failure, so I bought some slightly larger round cardboard boxes off *ebay.* I created the label artwork and had it made into a rubber stamp which I printed onto the box lids with blue ink (fig 24). Inside, the instructions were included on a small strip of paper:

> *INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE*
> *Have you always wanted to write a poem but don't have the talent? Well, now you can. Samsara's RAW WORDS contains two strips of finest quality words. Cut them up,*

play, meditate and arrange. Alternatively, follow the poet Tristan Tzara's example - place the cut-up words in a bag and pull them out in sequence. The resulting poem will resemble you. Tip: Why not buy multiple packs of RAW WORDS and even publish your own book of poetry!

Figure 23*:* Toy Pistol Caps (Pinterest, 2016: online).

Figure 24: Colton, D., 2016. Raw Words Image 2. [photograph] (private collection).

By engaging with these *Raw Words,* the practitioner, in effect, becomes a collaborator with Burroughs and Elliot on a new work. By using their word structures, the images are still theirs, but mixed with a new voice. In effect, the user becomes the appropriator of the appropriators.

Would it be possible to forge a successful career as a poet by buying numerous packs of

Raw Words and overtly recycling the work of past writers into new poems? To reiterate Barthes' quote from the introduction to this thesis, the contemporary author is '… born simultaneously with the text…' (1977: 145), the reader, and her interpretation is all that matters.

Perhaps schools could use Raw Words in their writing classes, or competitions could be organised to find the best Raw Words poem? In the future, the work of Raw Words consumers could be re-invented by a new group of cut-up writers, or a poet may admit that she owes her successful writing career to the Raw Words…

My own experiments with cut -ups demonstrated interesting random connections and thoughtful stimuli for creative work. They also provide insights into the original information that they are taken from. In this way they are useful for creating new pieces of writing that are not consciously 'set in motion' by the artist but can be shaped by them in the way that they wish. I also concluded that the quality of a cut-up is determined by the choice of original text and the technique used to cut it up; and that we can collaborate with great writers and great works of art to create new 'collaborations' that will become our own works. My experiments have shown that cut-up texts can produce some high-quality textual images.

These experiments have been useful to me in determining which aspects of cut-up technique have potential to be useful outside of artistic practice. To reinvigorate aleatory art practices and move them into a new space is the driving force behind this project. These aspects of cut-up processes, originally explored by Tzara, Burroughs, Gysin and Bowie have, I suggested, been re-imagined and combined to create a useful commercial product that commodifies the cut-up, potentially making the writing of quality poetry open to all[82]. Some of my own *Raw Words* poems are included on the following page (fig 25). In these three poems, the words and phrases are selected and arranged by me. Although the initial raw words presented to me on paper strips were, in a sense, random selections, the choice of the length of the texts, what to put where and how to arrange them was consciously mine.

[82] Further *Raw Words* products will extend the range of texts, allowing for many more combinations of artists and writers.

As I explained in Chapter 1, in this type of aleatory practice the artist is an alchemist, utilising chance to define the parameters (in this case the *Raw Words*) and then using his artistic skill to shape the work. I suggest that to create using random stimulus in this way still requires some level of creative insight and ability. Even so, as I argue in the introduction to Part Two of this thesis, I do not think that creative skill or lack of it is essential in a product like the *Raw Words*. It is the opportunity to participate and create one's own meaning that is important.

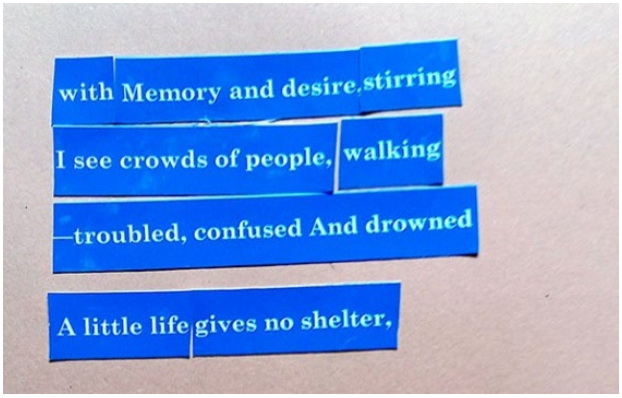


Figure 25: Colton, D., 2016. Raw Words Image 3. [photograph] (private collection).

A Little Life
With memory and desire stirring
I see crowds of people walking
Troubled, confused and drowned.
A little life gives no shelter.

Dead Tree
There is a shadow down King William street
The dead tree has begun to sprout under the shadow of the red rock.
Will it bloom this year-
If only for an hour?

Winter
No sound of water…
I bring the horoscope, he says,
'Lilacs out of this dead land'.
The man with a handful of dust goes south for the winter
from the hyacinth garden to London Bridge,
but in the winter, no sound of water.

Chapter 7: The *Luckybag of Life*

Aims:

This chapter will discuss my aleatorickal work; *The Luckybag of Life*, which was inspired principally by Burroughs' suggestions that cut-up textual images can create links between our inner and outer realities, and Bowie's claim that they can be prophetic, and likened to Tarot cards (see BBC (2013), Doggett, (2011), and Miles, (2014). My enquiry will compare the process of reading Tarot cards with that of creating textual cut-ups, referencing subconscious/conscious relationships, divination techniques, synchronicity and creative connections.

New Perspectives and Insights:

New knowledge comes from demonstrating Bowie's suggestion that there is a semantic link between cut-ups and the Tarot cards. I also re-imagine the cut-up aleatory processes of Burroughs and Bowie, taking them out of 20th century modernist art practice by commodifying them into a product that can connect us with chance. The work combines cut-ups with the concepts of the Tarot and the *I Ching* in a new commercial context. The *Luckybag* is an original product that takes the textual cut-up in a new direction.

Enquiry:

Burroughs believed that cut-ups can direct one to hidden elements buried in the subconscious (see Gysin and Wilson, 1982). As I have already explained in Part One, an insight of his was to see that cut-ups mirror the way we perceive our environment. Our consciousness does not follow a causal process. Burroughs also posited that cut-ups are; 'a juxtaposition of what's happening outside and what you're thinking of.' (Burroughs, 1965: 28). He went on to suggest that:

> … when you make cut-ups you do not get simply random juxtapositions of words, that they do mean something, and often these meanings refer to some future event. (Burroughs in Odier, 1989: 28)

The 1974 film, *Cracked Actor* (made for the BBC *Omnibus* series by Alan Yentob) followed David Bowie as he toured America on his *Diamond Dogs*[83] tour. Bowie had been introduced to cut-ups while reading Burroughs' book, *Nova Express* in preparation for a meeting with him, that had been set up by the Editors of *Rolling Stone* magazine (see Copetas,1974). Bowie was filmed cutting up texts from his notebooks. The cut-up technique, he tells Yentob, is good for '…igniting anything that might be in my imagination' (BBC, 2013, Online: 3mins. 55). And went on to say:

> I tried doing it with diaries and things […] finding out amazing things about me and what I had done and where I was going […] It seemed like it would predict the future and tell me a lot of things about the past … I suppose it is a very western tarot. (BBC, 2013, Online: 4 min. 10)

What I found useful here was how Bowie had made the link between cut-ups and the Tarot and I wanted to discover whether the two could be ontologically linked; and that, if given the right circumstances, cut-ups could be commodified and made into a commercial product like a set of Tarot cards.

The Tarot cards have no definitive history, but they are believed to have existed in Europe since the 14th century (see Hartley, 1970). Th first modern set were attributed to A E Waite[84]. I could not find a current estimate of the number of different Tarot decks available today; but a search for 'Tarot cards' on Amazon indicates over 2000 available (4th February 2018). Even in 2002, it was estimated that there were over 400 different decks (see Decker & Dummett in Iytzan[85], 2007). Today, the Tarot deck is certainly a commodity that is widely available.

Subconscious Connections:

William Lammey[86] proposes that the tarot '… enables your intuitive Soul/Spirit self to communicate with your objective Mind/Emotion/Body self' (1988: 5) and that the cards can act as a catalyst between the user's inner-self and their physical reality. As discussed in

[83] Bowie used cut-ups on at least 4 songs on *Diamond Dogs* (See Doggett, 2011 and Jones, 2017)

[84] Waite was a member of the Golden Dawn. He created the cards in 1909. They were Illustrated by Pamela Coleman Smith.

[85] Dr Itai Iytzan is author of *'Tarot cards: a literature review and evaluation of psychic versus psychological explanations'* (2007).

[86] William Lammey is the author of *Karmic Tarot*, 1988.

Chapter 3, Von Franz argues that many primitive societies used divinatory methods that were aimed at distracting or jolting the conscious mind. These included, for example, reading patterns in mud, or staring into the ripples in a bowl of water.[87] She went on to suggest that 'One cannot make head nor tail of a chaotic pattern; one is bewildered, and that moment of bewilderment brings up the intuition from the unconscious' (von Franz, 1980: 40). I wanted to discover whether both the Tarot and cut-ups work in a similar way. According to Iytzan the Tarot images present '… opportunities, hidden motives, and potentials...' (2007: 140). The chance combination of the chosen cards pushes one to search for meaning that Inna Semetsky [88]argues can lead to '…the discovery in practice of a deeper dimension of meaning, not unlike the interpretation of dreams in Jungian depth psychology' (2009: 108). Burroughs' claimed that 'Cut-ups can put you in touch with what you know and do not know that you know' (Burroughs, 1976: 18 min.36). And Bowie (BBC, 2013) suggested that when cutting words from an original context the 'raw words' can be ordered to create intriguing images, that despite the lack of connection, can reveal interesting insights about the source material, but also the cutters thoughts, preoccupations or state of mind. I wanted to explore this link between the Tarot and cut-ups to find out whether there was the potential to create a new commercial work that would use cut-ups to make creative acausal connections.

Synchronous Connections:

As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the most established methods for creating a-causal connections is the *I Ching*. In traditional 'western' thinking, events are evaluated through a lens of causality- cause and effect (see Jung in Wilhelm, 1951, reprinted 2003). The Ancient Chinese model (which produced the *I Ching*) tended to be synchronistic; as Jung suggests, '… the matter of interest seems to be the configuration formed by chance events in the moment of observation…' (Jung in Wilhelm, 1951, reprinted 2003: xxiii). The *I Ching* suggests that all that happens in a particular moment possesses the *quality* of that moment – a convergence of coincidental events. Jung proposed that there are:

[87] The Edwardian artist, Austin Spare (1886-1956) did something similar with word 'sigils'. Writing down his desires in an ornamental jumble of letters, the aim was to bypass the conscious mind, allowing the idea to penetrate the subconscious.
[88]Dr Inna Semetsky is author of *'Transforming ourselves/transforming curriculum: spiritual education and Tarot symbolism'* (2009).

> … psychic parallelisms which simply cannot be related to each other causally but must be connected by another kind of principle altogether… [he suggested that this connection] … seemed to lie essentially in the relative simultaneity of the events, hence the term 'synchronistic. (Jung, 1997: 84)

It is interesting that Iytzan cites occultists Sharman- Burke & Green, and Waite, as suggesting that the Tarot works in a similar way, revealing '… the *quality of the moment* [my italics] for a consulting individual' (Iytzan, 2007:140).

As I also discussed in Chapter 3, Buddhist theology maintains that all thoughts and actions are in constant flux, moving between the inner realities of human consciousness and interacting with our material realities. To this extent, internal and external are connected, and what synchronicity suggests is that we can tap into these unique moments; that we can connect with the universal 'flow' of things.

If one takes a synchronistic reading I would argue that any system that represents or isolates a given moment, should be readable in the same way as the *I Ching*. And this would include Tarot cards and cut-up texts.

Creative Connections:

Again, in Chapter 3, I documented how humans are predisposed to look for patterns and make connections; the terms pareidolia and apophenia describe how humans are predisposed to see meaning in visual images or to attribute meaning to perceived connections, and I explained how I saw creative potential in this. Edward De Bono (1970)[89]explains that the mind creates these patterns and then can react and respond to them. However, as patterns are used, they become established, and it can be difficult to change them. Creativity, he suggests is about restructuring and escaping from established patterns. It is this tendency to look for patterns and/or meaning that can be utilised in the development of creative chance connections. Creativity is the connecting of things to make something new. By linking unrelated elements together, we can create new possibilities

[89] Edward de Bono was the originator of' Lateral Thinking' or 'Thinking outside the Box'.

and new ways of seeing. These connections can help us to see previously unforeseen links between ideas or help us in processing information or solving problems. What we need is a method of restructuring these patterns, and tools like the Tarot and the cut-ups can help us to do this. To re-iterate with this quote from Pareto: '… an idea is nothing more or less than a new combination of old elements' (Pareto in Webb Young 2003: 15) and I suggest that when we know this, we can play with creating new combinations out of the old or tap into a creative union between our subjective selves and chance.

If we consult the Tarot for the purposes of divination or help with solving a problem, we are linking the visual and textual images that the cards present to us with a certain mental picture or set of circumstances. Semetsky (2009) adds that the Tarot does not read a client's fate, but instead empowers them to make sound decisions, choose a course of action or understand hidden or unconscious issues.

The Process:

Since I began to explore cut-ups and their links to the Tarot cards I have continued to experiment with them using the *Thoth Deck*, designed by occultist Aleister Crowley[90]. A pack of Tarot cards usually include instructions on what the cards mean and how to interpret them. My process has been to ignore these meanings and instead try to use intuition to read them, in the same way that Burroughs, Gysin and Bowie had arranged and read their cut-ups. The parameters I set were these; think of a question, spread the cards face down, pick three cards at random and then place them down in the order and orientation in which they were picked. I had found this process successful, in that it was relatively easy to make connections between a question and the imagery in the cards. This was one of the experiments that I carried out (fig 26):

I have wanted to travel to Canada for a few years now but have not gone mainly due to my dislike of long-haul economy class flying. So, I asked the cards the question; 'Is this the year I

[90] The *Thoth Tarot Deck.* Stamford: U.S. Games Systems, Inc.

should visit Toronto?' I repeated the question in my head as I shuffled the pack, then spread out the cards, and picked three at random. They came out as shown here:

Figure 26: 3 cards from the Thoth Tarot Deck. Crowley, A., Harris, F. (1978, reprinted 2006) Stamford: U.S. Games Systems, Inc.

This was my interpretation of the cards:

The first card, Science, suggested a fence, crossed swords and a structure that was blocking me. I decided that the 'practicalities' had been stopping me going. The background of the second card, Knight of Swords looked like a waterfall, and as a principal reason for visiting Toronto was to see Niagara Falls, I took this to be an image of me flying over the falls, accompanied by birds. Both the second and third cards were brightly coloured and felt positive. The third card, the Queen of Swords showed a smiling figure in the sky pointing left. When I look at my world map (on the wall of my study) Canada is in this direction. My conclusion is that these cards were telling me to go on my visit.

Whether this is the result of synchronicity, linking with unconscious desires, or making conscious creative connections is not important. What I wanted to find out was whether cut-ups could be 'read' in the same way, so these experiments with the cards were to establish a 'control' situation. If I could make the cards work, then I had something to aim for with the cut-up experiments.

My starting point with the cut-ups was to cut phrases and clusters of words from

newspapers and magazines as I had done with the *Raw Words* experiments. (fig 27).
As before, it was easy to create new narratives from the word selections.

Figure 27: Colton, D., 2017. Cut-up experiment number 4. [photograph] (private collection).

I chose six of the short phrases at random and put them in an envelope (fig 28). I then tried to find answers or links to different questions using the same method as I had with the cards; but even though I could easily create new narrative ideas, it was hard to semantically link them with any of the questions. The feedback I had been given by two colleagues had backed this up, so I abandoned the process and decided to try something else.

Figure 28: Colton, D., 2017. Luckybag Image 1. [photograph] (private collection).

I cut up texts from two different newspapers until I had a group of small rectangles. I then mixed them up (fig 29).

Figure 29: Colton, D., 2017. Cut-up experiment number 5. [photographs] (private collection).

With my eyes closed I picked three at random and placed them down in sequence, as I had done with the cards. I asked the question; 'should I swap from working full-time to part-time?' and then used a similar technique that Phillips had used on his *A Humument* project and that Austin Kleon had used in his *Newspaper Blackout*[91], by selecting phrases that stood out from the lines of text and isolating them with a pen (fig 30).

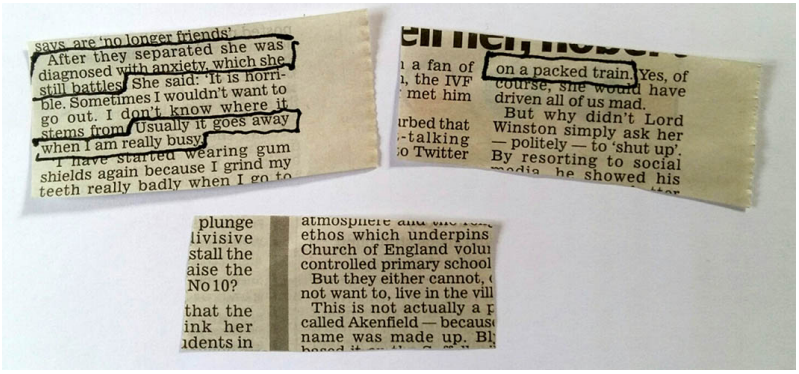


Figure 30: Colton, D., 2017. Cut-up experiment number 6. [photograph] (private collection).

Once again, the possibilities were restricted by the lack of range in the short texts. I knew they would work with larger pieces, but this would change the nature of what I was trying to do[92]. I continued to experiment, mixing these rectangles of text with the phrases I had made earlier.

Finally, I tried cutting individual words, mixed with some double word combinations and conjunctions, and shuffled forty of them together. I used the same technique I had used with the newspaper rectangles and asked two different questions that had been on my

[91] The writer Austin Kleon creates poetry by redacting pages from the *New York Times* (See Kleon, 2010).

[92] I didn't want to move too far towards Kleon's process.

mind recently: 'should I approach *the Guardian* newspaper with a proposal for a feature on cut-ups?' and again: 'should I swap from working full-time to part-time?' The two answers I received are shown here (fig 31).

Figure 31: Colton, D., 2018. Cut-up experiment number 7. [photograph] (private collection).

I was surprised by the quality of these answers. To the question; 'should I approach *the Guardian* newspaper with a proposal for a feature on cut-ups? The answer was; *Love it. How much.* And to 'should I swap from working full-time to part-time?' the answer was; *Last minute to leave. HABIT*. I could relate both texts to the questions I had asked, and I felt that this process had worked remarkably well, in that it had mirrored my experiment with the Tarot cards earlier. On a practical level, I felt that the balance between the cryptic nature of the textual pieces and the number of words needed for the process to work was about right. I decided that this was a workable technique that I could move forward with.

The Product:

When I began to explore the commodification of access to chance, an image that came to mind was the 'luckybag' which, when I was a child, was, for me, the embodiment of chance (fig 32). These products were a constant in my childhood; cheap, badly designed and readily available from the sweet shops and newsagents where I grew up.

The small brightly coloured paper bag contained a mixture of random sweets, and novelty items. On their own, none of the elements were of any interest. The sweets were poor quality and the novelties were usually pointless plastic objects stamped 'Empire made' or 'Made in Hong Kong' – at the time, a sure sign of their inferior quality. What I did like though, was the excitement of opening the bag, the wondering of what could be inside; that moment

suspended between knowing and not knowing…

I discovered the phrase 'Luckybag of Life' in the book *45* by the artist Bill Drummond, and my interest was provoked by the following passage; 'There is still time for you to go out there and dip your hands in the lucky bag of life, to gather the storm clouds of fantasy and anoint your own genius' (Drummond, 2000, reprinted 2001: 195). Drummond had been talking about positive creative thinking and had gone on to say that; '… when you push your boat… take that step into the… and just say Yes, things happen' (Drummond, 2000, reprinted 2001: 193). I liked both the phrase and the idea behind it.

Figure 32*:* Range Rider Lucky Bag (Pinterest, 2017: online)

My cut-up response to the Tarot combines forty random words with the concept of the luckybag. The *Luckybag of Life* is made of a semi- transparent paper and contains a few sweets, a badge and an envelope of raw words and short phrases.[93] It is branded with a green and yellow colour palette and a *Burroughs & Drummond* logo (fig 33 and fig 34). The work is both an aleatorickal device and a commercial product. It is a tool for linking subconscious desires with material reality, for help in make conscious creative connections, or a way of accessing synchronous acausal connections by connecting the user with chance.

[93] Whilst creating them I realised that there was a thought-provoking parallel between this work and the Fluxus artist Ben Vautier's *Mystery Box* artworks. Vautier's boxes were filled with rubbish and doubled as artworks and also a handy way to get rid of unwanted rubbish. (see Kellin, 1995). The basic raw material of my *Luckybag* is rubbish. Old newspapers – a free and virtually unlimited resource.

Figure 33: Colton, D., 2017. Luckybag Image 2. [photograph] (private collection).
Figure 34: Colton, D., 2017. Luckybag Badge. [Adobe Illustrator Image] (private collection).

> *INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE*
> *There are no coincidences and no accidents. All is connected - Your reality, your thoughts, your desires, your problems - everything. Open the bag and spread the raw words out in front of you. Ask your question and carefully pick 3 words at random. Don't try too hard; let the words speak to you – they should tell you what you wish to know. All meaning is here- Focus and you will find the answer.*

As I pointed out at the start of this chapter, Burroughs and Bowie both believed that cut-ups work on a metaphysical[94] level and I had wanted to explore this. In this discourse I have investigated how textural cut-ups could be linked with acausal connectivity - Jung's synchronicity. I have also considered Von Franz's ideas on divination and unconscious intuition, Pareto's creative linking of ideas and De Bono's 'lateral thinking' to create new directions and break established patterns.

I did not set out to prove how textual cut-ups work, only to discover if they could be utilised and commodified in a similar way to the Tarot. Through my investigation and my experiments, I can now conclude that, if the selection of the cut-up texts has enough variety, the answer to this is positive.

[94] Metaphysical- Relating to the transcendent or to a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses (see Merriam-Webster dictionary).

I did find the results of my final *Luckybag* experiment surprising. In my experiments, the two answers that I received corresponded almost exactly to the questions I had asked. I could see how Bowie, by cutting up his notebooks, could have found results that made him describe his cut-ups as being like the Tarot.

My praxis has shown that through my experiments with Burroughs' cut-ups and the Tarot cards I have clarified Bowie's suggestion of a semantic link between certain types of cut-ups and the Tarot. And in my *Luckybag,* I have also created a viable way to commodify cut-up texts. The *Luckybag of Life* has achieved its aim of turning cut-ups into a potential commercial product.

Chapter 8: *Instant Karma Scratch Card* and *Karma Kards*

Aims:

Currently, the commodification of chance exists in the form of lotteries, bingo, scratch-cards and betting. In his paper on gambling and the state, Martin Young defines gambling as 'the state-sanctioned commodification of chance' and a 'contemporary form of consumption' (Young, 2010: 254). This chapter describes my journey to explore how I could develop these lotteries and scratch-cards to create an alternative; a system that connects people through acts of goodwill and kindness.

The initial intention was to develop the various interventionist card formats created by Eno and Schmidt, McLuhan and Brecht. However, as the project developed, I found more potential in lottery ephemera, scratch-cards and 1960s bubble-gum cards. Other drivers for the project were the Buddhist[95] concept of Karma, a *Daily Mail* article on philanthropy and recent academic studies on the effects of positive actions, kindness and generosity.

New Perspectives and Insights:

The Instant Karma Scratch Card and *Karma Kards* connect the contemporary secular consumer with the Buddhist concept of the natural causal law of karma, and recent research into the positive effects of kindness and generosity. They present an alternative to the proliferation of scratch cards, lotteries and betting opportunities that are currently available, by subverting the current lottery paradigm. Whereas this traditional commodification of chance has long been associated with gambling and material gain, these new cards prompt the consumer to partake in a positive beneficial act; with the potential to bring positive change to their own life and those of others.

[95] Although the concept of Karma appears in a number of Indian philosophies and religions, I will be concerned only with the Buddhist tradition, as this brings it into line with the other ideas within the thesis).

Enquiry:

Karma (from the Sanskrit 'Karman' meaning action) originated in the philosophical traditions of India, and is a key concept in Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Taoism. Karma is often misunderstood in popular culture. As Goldberg (2010) states, it is often seen as 'cosmic justice' or fate, which it is not. Karma is not passive, it is active.

Accordingly, Goldberg defines Karma thus; 'that every action has an equal and opposite reaction; we reap what we sow' (2010: 11). Thien-An explains that according to the law of Karma 'if a person does something, what he does will inevitably have an effect on him, at present or in the future, and what this effect will be is determined by the character of his original action' (1975: 53). Karma takes no moral stand. Our Karma is not good or bad. It is just ours.

According to the current (14th) Dalai Lama, for an action to be karmic it must have intention that leads to a particular action. Each action has three stages, the intentional thought that drives the action, the action itself, and the consequences of the action and each of these stages can vary in intensity. The Dalai Lama suggests that when carrying out a positive act one should make sure that the 'positive motivation is very strong' (1997:78) and you focus your intention to engage in the act, and afterwards you focus the positive karma generated towards your own enlightenment and to the wellbeing of all other beings 1997:78). Karmic philosophy states that Karma resonates in this life, but also in future incarnations too.

However, Wilson makes the case for a different aspect of Karmic law; the concept of Karma as *The Blind Machine* (1977, reprinted 2013: 135). Wilson's view is that the effects of actions, good or bad, continue to resonate in *this* life, in the material world of human interactions *and not* in some future re-incarnation of the perpetrator. He explains that; 'Karma in the original Buddhist scriptures is a blind machine; in fact, it is functionally identical with the scientific concept of natural law' (Wilson, 2007, reprinted 2013: 135). He goes on to argue that:

> Sentimental ethical ideas about justice being built into the machine [of Buddhist ideology] so that those who do evil in one life are punished for it in another life, were added later by theologians reasoning from their own moralistic prejudices. (Wilson, 1977, reprinted 2013: 135)

According to Wilson, the Buddha simply indicated that both good and evil acts metered out in the past are still being felt today, and that these effects continue to be felt until the 'wheel' is stopped. Wilson posits that because of the robotic thinking of most humans, the continuing resonance of bad acts far outweighs that of good; with the 'wheel of Karma' '…moving in the same terrible direction, violence breeding more violence, hatred breeding more hatred, war breeding more war.' (Wilson, 1977, reprinted 2013: 135). He goes on to suggest that the only way to stop the wheel is 'to stop it inside yourself, by giving up bad energy and concentrating on the positive' (Wilson, 1977, reprinted 2013: 135).

This idea of good or bad actions resonating through societal structures is further backed up by recent scientific studies.

Through their 2010 research on cooperative behaviour, Fowler and Christakis discovered that generous acts are contagious and can spread across human networks, so that one initial act of kindness or generosity will be cascaded through to other people to three degrees of separation:

> The results suggest that each additional contribution a subject makes to the public good in the first period is tripled over the course of the experiment by other subjects who are directly or indirectly influenced to contribute more as a consequence. These results show experimentally that cooperative behaviour cascades in human social networks. (*PNAS.* 107 (12) p. 5334)

This implies that behaviour can spread by a 'diverse set of mechanisms' and that 'as a result, each person in a network can influence dozens or even hundreds of people, some of whom she does not know and has not met (*PNAS.* 107 (12) p. 5337). This implies that there is an exponential growth of generous behaviour from one single act.

Zaki[96], in his 2016 article for *Scientific American* states that 'Generosity is contagious: People imitate others' 'prosocial behaviors' and that they also 'catch' cooperation and generosity from others' (Zaki, 2016: Online). He also posits that 'if prosocial conformity indeed spreads across affect and action, this knowledge could promote novel intervention techniques that focus on instilling prosocial empathic norms, in addition to behavioural norms' (Nook et al. 2016). What this suggests is that this knowledge could be harnessed to create *new* methods to promote empathy and generosity.

The *Instant Karma Scratch Card:*

Young suggests that gambling is a way of engaging with risk in a 'way that is bounded and controllable' (2010: 254)[97]. He points out that the state is committed to marketing and selling a range of consumer products based on chance; 'lotteries, electronic gambling machines, sports betting and race betting' (2010: 254) and that the state is the regulator, but also a financial beneficiary of the gambling industry. The engine that drives this industry, he argues, is monetary gain[98].

Even so, the *National Lottery* claims to have raised a great deal of money for good causes. (As of 21st March 2018, the *National Lottery* claims to have raised 37 billion pounds and supported 525,000 good causes since it started in 1994. (see https://www.lotterygood causes.org.uk/ good-causes).

Following on from my research into Karma and generosity I set out to create a scratch-card that would subvert the current lottery paradigm. This card would only help good causes and offer no prizes. My starting point was to make a card that would masquerade as those currently on sale from retail outlets. This card would look like a traditional lottery card and be made available alongside (or even hidden within) the strips of lottery scratch-cards for sale in retail outlets. The card would also be free.[99] Instead of offering a chance to win

[96] Jamil Zaki is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, and director of the Stanford Social Neuroscience Lab.

[97] I acknowledge that for some people gambling is a problem and not 'controllable'.

[98] I recognise that some charities use lotteries and scratch-cards to raise money to support themselves.

[99] As I discussed in Chapter 4, all the works created for this project, except this one, are for sale. I chose to make this work free as a cost would cause a conflict between the purchase of the traditional Lottery card and this one.

money or prizes, this card would prompt the participant to carry out a chosen generous act (fig 35).

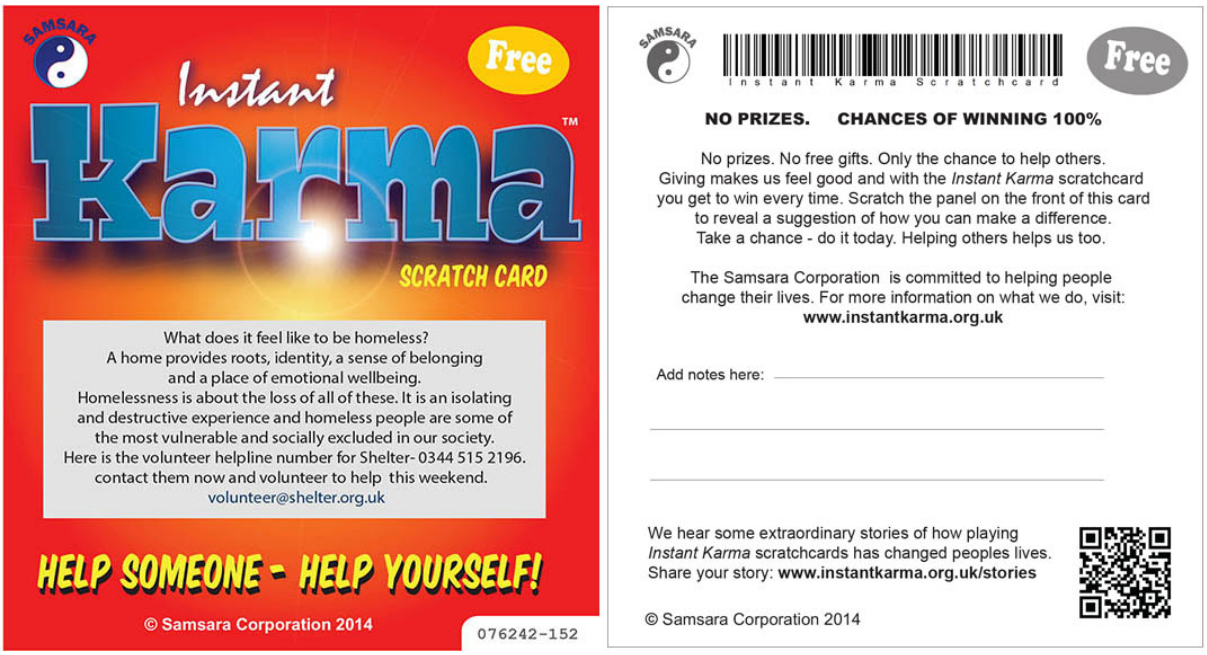


Figure 35: Colton, D., 2017. Instant Karma Scratch-card. [Adobe Photoshop Image] (private collection).

The design aims to mirror the style of current lottery scratch-cards. They are also the same size and format and printed onto the same quality board. The silver scratch panel was hard to replicate and took a lot of experimentation with different materials. None worked to the required quality, but then I discovered that it was possible to buy silver scratch-able panels from ebay (see https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Sheet-Silver-Adhesive-Scratch-Off-Labels-Stickers-Rectangle-Games-CardsTickets/282884221454?hash= item41dd36aa0e:m:m Bp5oGm_Prsbnnlq6dZmXpg). These labels created a scratch panel that was identical to the ones used on commercial cards.

I envisage that *Instant Karma* cards would be available from retail outlets that currently sell lottery scratch-cards. The cards would be available to everyone, but the aim is that buyers of lottery scratch-cards would also take an *Instant Karma* card. The prosocial decision to choose to take a card and then act on it for the benefit of others would then trigger the Karmic consequences, as pointed out by the Dalai Lama earlier in this chapter. And as my

research also shows, both the perpetrator of the act and the receiver would both benefit from the action on a psychophysical level.

Karma Kards:

The chance discovery of a discarded newspaper in a hotel room in Oxford at Christmas 2014, led to the finding of an article entitled:

> 'Why are people so cruel to the kindest man in Britain?'

(Daily Mail, 2014: 31-32) (fig 36).

The article explored the decision by one Luke Cameron to do a 'good deed' every day for a year, and the subsequent joys, but also the occasional strange reactions and even hostility that was prompted by his actions. Examples of Luke's random 'good deeds' were leaving £10 at a petrol station to pay for the next customer's fuel, stopping a family in the street and presenting them with a gift card, and giving away a winning £25 lottery scratch-card to a stranger in a car park (See Daily Mail, 2014).

In the article he explained the transformative effect that these positive actions had had on his state of mind and his outlook on life. He talked about the 'sense of euphoria' gained from carrying out good deeds, and how the deeds had even led to positive changes in his own life (2014: 31). After carrying out one of these 'random acts of kindness' Cameron would leave the recipient with a card on which was written:

> Dear Stranger, today I've carried out a random act of kindness. All I ask is that you do one for someone else in return. (Cameron in Daily Mail, 2014: 31)

Figure 36: Colton, D., 2014. Notebook page with newspaper article. [photograph] (private collection).

This article resonated with the ideas on the reciprocation of generosity that I had been researching and it encouraged me to develop the scratch-card theme further.
As I was inspired by Cameron and his ideas, and I decided to adapt and develop the concept into a chance product (fig 37). I wanted to commercialise the concept of 'random acts of kindness.'

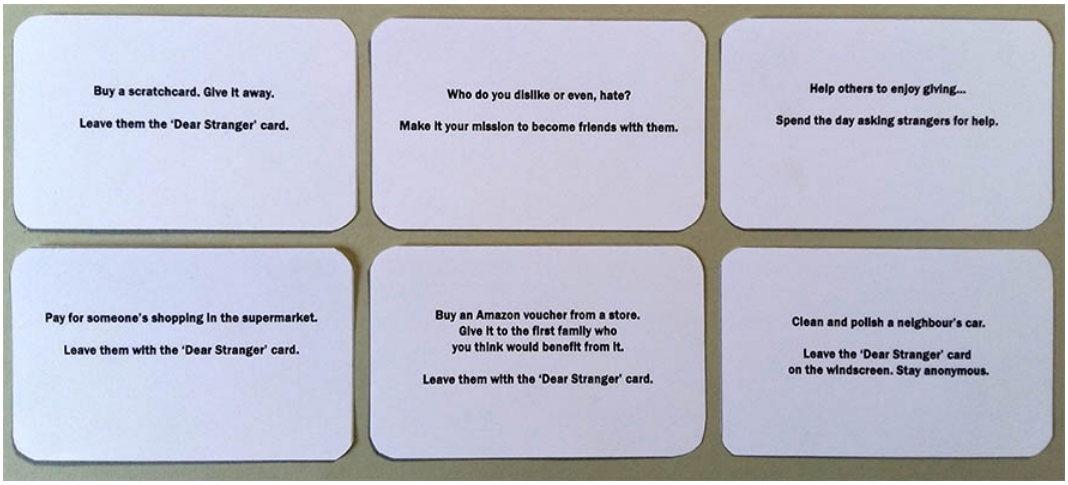


Figure 37: Colton, D., 2017. Karma Kards Image 1. [photograph] (private collection).

As a child in the 1960s I was fascinated by the packs of American bubble- gum and trading cards that appeared in the newsagents, alongside the imported monster and superhero comics that I spent most of my pocket money on. These cards, displayed in crudely designed

point of sale boxes, featured gory and exciting pulp illustrations with subjects like the American Civil War, Martians attacking the earth and the adventures of Batman...

These cards were one of my first attempts at developing an aleatorickal product. When I began to think about how I could design a set of cards, I made the connection with the Topps cards that I had collected as a child, utilising a largely subconscious process that I used as a commercial designer (see Chapter 4). All of the original bubble-gum cards produced by the Topps company followed a similar format: two cards and a stick or two of gum, contained in a lurid, brightly coloured pack. These packs were presented in a cardboard point-of-sale box (fig 38). I decided to use the same format as it enabled me to present two cards in a closed pack, making sure that the contents were unseen until opened, and enabling a spontaneous reaction to the suggestions on the cards (fig 39 and 40). The point-of-sale box would also be an ideal way to promote the concept as it could be displayed by the pay point in petrol stations, shops and supermarkets.

Figure 38*:* Mars Attacks. Point-of-Sale packaging. (sneakpeek.ca, no date: online).

Figure 39: Colton, D., 2017. Karma Kards Image 2. [photograph] (private collection).

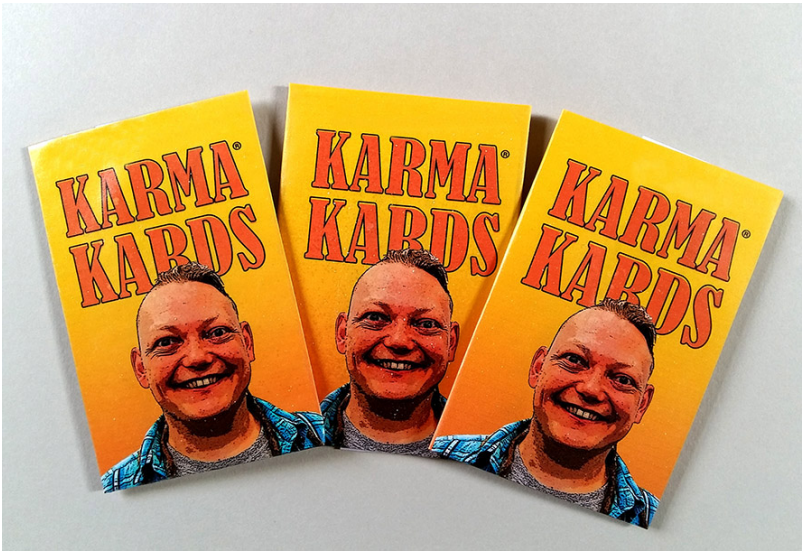


Figure 40: Colton, D., 2017. Karma Kards Image 3. [photograph] (private collection).

The pack contains two cards; the first one suggests a generous action that can be carried out. (Some of these suggestions were taken from the article on Cameron and I also added others). The second one mirrored the card that he left with people after carrying out an act of kindness (fig 41).

Figure 41: Colton, D., 2017. Karma Kards Image 4. [photograph] (private collection).

Recently, while writing up this chapter, I discovered that there is now a website called Random Acts of Kindness[100] (See https://www.randomactsofkindness.org). The website encourages acts of kindness, with an emphasis on teaching kindness at school. There are even lesson plans available from the site.

Working on this project did affect me in a similar way to that proposed by Fowler and Christakis' research; that acts of generosity are contagious. As I researched the ideas and worked on the cards, I found myself becoming more aware of opportunities to engage with people in ways that I hadn't considered previously. On one occasion I sat and talked to a homeless woman in Wolverhampton and gave her thirty pounds. On other occasions I gave

[100] Also, during the Christian period of Lent, there was a blackboard displayed in the café at the Elim Bible College in Nantwich, Cheshire. Each day, for 40 days, the board was updated with a different suggestion for a random act of kindness.

away expensive possessions because I thought that the person might benefit from them more that I would. These are subjective observations, however, from a personal view, just the act of thinking about being generous prompted me to act generously. This state of mind has stayed with me even though I completed the project nearly a year ago. I have come to enjoy giving things away.

Chapter 9: *Commuter Curve-ball Cards*

> We are 'asleep' compared with what we could be. We are dreaming. We are entranced. We are automatized. We are caught in illusions while thinking we are perceiving reality (Tart, 1986: x).

Aims:

This chapter explains how my praxis led to the creation of a new work; The *Commuter Curve-ball Cards.* These cards are an aleatorickal work that pushes the user to examine how they relate to the world around them.

The concept initially developed from my interest in Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies* cards which were designed to jolt the artist out of creative block or habitual working practices. They do this by presenting a variety of cryptic aphorisms on small white cards that the artist picks at random, and then applies to their situation and acts upon.

I wanted to take the format of these cards and find a way to re-imagine them for a more 'everyday' role, outside of artistic practice. My aim was to create a commercial product that would trigger a more mindful[101] approach to living. Kabat-Zinn[102] explains that mindfulness is about 'examining who we are, with questioning our view of the world and our place in it, and with cultivating some appreciation for the fullness of each moment we are alive' (1994:3). I envisaged that by appropriating the *Oblique Strategies* cards, and blending traditional Buddhist concepts with a commercial product, I could create a new work that would achieve this and jolt the user out of what Tart calls 'the sleep of everyday life' (Tart, 1986:85).

[101] Mindfulness-maintaining a heightened state of awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis (see Merriam-Webster dictionary).

[102] Jon Kabat-Zinn is Professor Emeritus of Medicine and Founder of the *Center of Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society* at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

New Perspectives and Insights:

Although the *Oblique Strategies* are already a niche consumer product, sold as an aid for artists and musicians, my insight has been to develop the format and adapt it for use outside of artistic practice. The *Curve-ball Cards* are for use in 'everyday' situations such as working, travelling, social interactions and relationships. The cards act as the random director of the user's day to day actions, pushing them to engage more fully with what they do and the decisions that they make. They are an aid to being in the moment, for introspection, and a tool for breaking habits (fig 42). The *Curve-ball Cards* re-imagine two established card formats; the *Oblique Strategies* and *Monopoly Chance* and *Community Chest* cards, combining them to create a new aleatorikal commercial product.

Figure 42: Colton, D., 2016. Commuter Curve-ball Cards. Image 1 [photograph] (private collection).

Enquiry:

Like dice, the *Oblique Strategies* cards are already a consumer product. Since their inception, they have been for sale, even if this is just to a small market of artists and musicians via mail order, and more recently, the internet. Currently a set will cost around

£40[103].

The concept of the cards was not new. Their development can be traced through the work of John Cage, George Brecht, Marshall McLuhan and Tom Phillips. The first edition of 500 *Oblique Strategies* packs was published in 1975 by the self-styled 'non-musician', Brian Eno and the visual artist, Peter Schmidt. Since then there have been five more editions; the fifth, and so far, final edition was published in 2001. The cards come in a small black box (fig 43) which the writer Simon Armitage described as looking like a 'mini coffin' (BBC Radio 4, 2014, Online: 1 min. 40). The cards are titled: *OBLIQUE STRATEGIES- Over one hundred worthwhile dilemmas.* Each card measures 7 x 9cm. The short messages printed on the cards in sparse prosaic type are cryptic and obscure, for example;

Swap instruments
Distorting time
Remember… those quiet evenings
Accept advice
Ask people to work against their better judgement

Figure 43: Colton, D., 2015. Oblique Strategies Cards [photograph] (private collection).

[103] At the time of writing (February 2018) they cost around £40. An original 1975 set is on sale on *e-bay* for £374. They are also available as an app, or in a digital version on various websites.

The idea is to pick a card at random and then interpret and act on the suggestion. Even though Schmidt was a visual artist, the cards were predominantly aimed at the musician, however, the cryptic nature of the aphorisms means that they could, in practice, be used in any artistic or creative dilemma.

The most well-documented use of the *Oblique Strategies* cards was in the making of David Bowie's three albums, often referred to as the Berlin trilogy: *Low* (1977), *Heroes* (1977) and *Lodger* (1979).

It was whilst reading a review of Bowie's Low album[104] as I stood on Manchester's Piccadilly station in January 1977, that led to my first encounter with the Oblique Strategies cards and the process of using them. Later, I had the opportunity to try them out myself when a friend of mine acquired a set. I remember that they reminded me of some of the novelty toys and ephemera that I had played with as a child. To me, they were exciting and gave off an aura of the mysterious - they felt like a magic doorway to something 'other.' To me, the cards had the same aura as the Ouija board.

In late 1976, David Bowie was exploring new ways of creating music. His collaborators on his latest album were Brian Eno, and the producer Tony Visconti. According to Bowie's biographer, David Buckley (1999), Eno's main contribution was to push Bowie to experiment; to think in lateral and non-linear ways and to concern himself with texture and shape, rather than narration. The key element in the process was the *Oblique Strategies* cards.

Journalist, Paul Morley, suggests that, in a sense, 'the producer of these albums was not Visconti, but the *Oblique Strategies* cards. 'You just get that sense of everything constantly dissolving (…) It was like they were following their horoscopes or something. It never seemed fixed' (BBC Radio 4, 2014, Online: 6 min 25). For me this was an important observation in the development of my own ideas relating to interventionist cards.

[104] *Homage to Catatonia.* A review of the album in *New Musical Express*, 22 January 1977 by music journalist Charles Shaar Murray. (See http://www.davidbowie.com/news/charles-shaar-murray-low-review-57231).

Eno had noticed that artists often tend to panic in a recording studio situation as they have inevitable pressures, deadlines and subsequent costs to deal with. According to Armitage, that panic delivers a 'head on' approach that often 'delivers an ordinary but acceptable result'. (BBC Radio 4, 2014, Online: 7 min 10). Armitage went on to say that; 'In writing you fall into patterns, they become, in a sense, the paths of least resistance (…) like tracks in snow, and the more you follow them, the more ingrained they become. They become ruts… you get into a rut' (BBC Radio 4, 2014, Online: 7 min 30).

The *Oblique Strategies* offer a way out of this. A method of escaping the well-trodden creative path and a chance to think more laterally. As Morley suggests, when using the cards in a creative context, *they* can become the producer or director of the work. The creative decisions and experiments are driven by the aphorisms on the cards. Eno makes an interesting link between the *I Ching* and the *Oblique Strategies:*

> …you pull an I Ching thing, and it says something to you, and you say, 'What does that line mean? What you're really saying is, 'Which part of me can I describe in that way?' And as soon as you do that, the bits of you start to separate out, and you can start to look at the dynamics of them... (Eno in *the Wire*, 1995: Online)

These cards work by linking conscious thoughts with unconscious intuition in the same way as the *I Ching* and the *Tarot* (See Chapter 7). But what I wanted to do was to find a new direction for these interventionist cards. I knew from my experiments, both in my own work, and with the students that I teach, that these cards work in a creative context. As I explained earlier, the *Oblique Strategies* are already a consumer product, but I also wanted to explore whether they could be modified to work in another way; one that would take them out of artistic practice and into the every-day and into a less esoteric space. This would create the opportunity of further extending the concept to appeal to a different audience.

The Process:

As a starting point, I wanted to explore the notion of the cards as a producer or director. I also wanted to investigate the links that I had discovered between Eno and Bowie's use of the cards and Rhinehart's dice ideas.

Rhinehart (no date: Online) also talks of the 'random director' when discussing his philosophy of 'dice living.' The throw of the die, he says, can bring change into ordered and constrained lives. To some extent we can choose to be part of this process of change and randomness by allowing the dice to direct our decision making. I wanted these new cards to work like this. Earlier, when experimenting with the *Oblique Strategies*, I had realised that with a few changes, I could alter the cards so that they worked like throwing dice. I tried writing various general instructions on cards (fig 44). I found that picking one at random, from the pack and then following the instruction was very similar to setting six instructions to corresponding dice numbers and then throwing the die to pick one.

Figure 44: Colton, D., 2016. Card Experiment 1 [photograph] (private collection).

The difference was that, with the dice, the user must set the options them-self, but I felt that the 'random director' would be more powerful if the choices were already there to be picked from, rather than being set by the user. This would add another level of randomness between the user and the work. When using dice in decision making, the extent that the user chooses to comply with, or give up control is in their hands.

I began experimenting with the *Chance* and *Community Chest* cards that are part of the board game, *Monopoly* (fig 45). These two sets of cards issue instructions or commands- *Go to Jail. Go back to Old Kent Road. Your Building and Loan matures- Collect £150.* And the process works differently than the *Oblique Strategies*. They do not issue cryptic aphorisms, instead they present practical instructions to be followed[105]. As I have explained, I had begun by trying out simple everyday commands, but decided that for the concept to work effectively they needed to become more specific and instructional, as they are in the *Monopoly* sets.

According to Kevin Tostado[106], the majority of the *Monopoly Chance* cards will move the player to another space on the board, and the *Community Chest* cards give out money- that *Chance* are the 'movement deck' and *Community Chest* are the 'money deck' (Quora, 2011: Online).

Figure 45: Monopoly Chance and Community Chest cards (ebay.ie, 2017: online)

It was my intention to create a new set of cards that had the format of the *Oblique Strategies* but were more instructional like the *Monopoly* cards. These cards would offer instructions that linked to a *specific situation* and they would push the user out of comfortable or habitual patterns of behaviour and thought (like the *Oblique Strategies*) but in a more direct and quotidian way.

[105] Brecht's *Event Scores* (a direct influence on the *Oblique Strategies*) presented elemental instructions which aimed push the user to interact with, and experience, the nature of existence (See Ouzounian, 2011). Although these cards were in a sense, instructional, they were still cryptic. The *Event Scores* are discussed further as an influence on the *Suicide Box* (See Chapter 9).
[106] Kevin Tostado, was the director of *Under the Boardwalk: The Monopoly Story*.

As I travel on the train frequently, I decided to create a sample set of cards for train commuters and decided on the name *Commuter Curve-ball Cards* (fig 46).

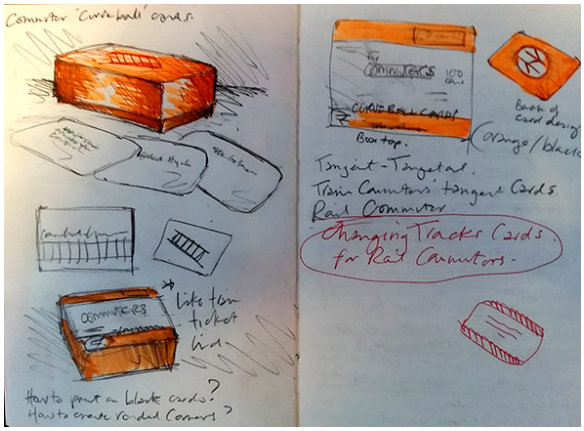


Figure 46: Colton, D., 2015. Card Drawing from notebook [scan] (private collection).

These cards offer instructions relating to train commuting and the world of work. Taking a lead from the *Chance* 'movement deck' *and the Community Chest* 'money deck,' I created two types of cards; some that issue practical instructions, for example - *'Swap carriages, Go first class, Involve yourself in someone else's conversation, Phone your boss with an idea'* and others that issue thought instructions; *'Think- Why do I do my job? Meditate. Look out of the window- See the birds. Notice how free they are.'* (fig 47 and 48).

Figure 47: Colton, D., 2016. Commuter Curve-ball Cards. Image 2 [photograph] (private collection).

Using these cards is like using the dice. The insight or creative link does not come from connecting two unrelated elements like it does in the *Oblique Strategies*; instead, these cards push the user out of their patterns of thought and behaviour, out of their 'comfort zone' or 'reality tunnel' in a more direct way.

As discussed earlier, relinquishing control can be frightening, but to agree with Rhinehart (see Chapter 2) and accept that 'All decisions are illusions' Rhinehart, no date: Online) we are then free to let the cards decide. Thien-An also advocates that 'if a person limits his mind, he cannot appreciate the totality of life' (1975: 161). I argue that to *Pick a card - Take a break from yourself* (as it says on the box lid) is an exercise in Buddhist non- attachment. The challenge is to give up an element of control over one's behaviour by using the cards to create awareness or change. It is whilst doing this and reflecting on it afterwards that the potential connection or insight is made.

Figure 48: Colton, D., 2016. Commuter Curve-ball Cards. Image 3 [photograph] (private collection).

The *Commuter Curve-ball Cards:*

I created and printed ten packs of *Commuter Curve-ball Cards.* The boxes I bought from ebay. I gave a few sets out to people that travel regularly on the train with me. I had some useful feedback. One person told me that she was not happy about stealing (one card prompts you to *Steal something*) and said that this caused a problem for her. She decided that if she picked this card, she would get around the issue by instead taking a pen or some paperclips from the stationery cupboard at work. Another card user wanted to know if he could remove the cards that he didn't like or didn't agree with. These issues of control and ethics often came up when people use dice to make decisions (see Chapter 2), but for these cards to facilitate the questioning of one's own morality in this way was an unexpected result. What this demonstrated was that these cards were working like the dice, and that by engaging with them, the users were thinking about, and questioning their actions.

Figure 49: Colton, D., 2015. Card Drawing from notebook [scan] (private collection).

I did try the Commuter Curve-ball Cards out myself on a few occasions in spring 2016 as I travelled on the train to work in Wolverhampton.
I received the instruction 'At each stop, swap carriages.' This resulted in the observation that the train I caught each day only had four carriages- a small point, but it made me realise that this was just one of the things that I did regularly that I didn't really notice. At Penkridge station, as I walked along the platform to swap to the next carriage It occurred to me that in the ten years I had been travelling through the station, I had never actually set foot there

before.

On another occasion I was instructed to 'Get involved with someone else's conversation'. The train I was on was quite empty, so I sat opposite a middle-aged man at the front of the train. We talked for most of the journey and he told me how he raised money for a school in Uganda, and how he regularly visited them to help build furniture and maintain the building. When I left the train, I asked for his email address, as I thought that I might like to get involved with his project and that I'd contact him. I didn't contact him, but the idea of getting involved with a charity stayed with me. Later that week, as I passed through Wolverhampton station, I spontaneously signed up to support a guide dog.

The initial aim of these cards was firstly to re-imagine the format of a well -known aleatory device for use outside of artistic practice; and secondly, to create a device that could facilitate an awareness of the users' thoughts, habits and decision making. I would say that the *Commuter Curve-ball Cards* were a success and that they effectively reshape Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies.* The feedback on the cards as a consumer object has been far better than I expected from the people to whom I had given a set, and those who had tried them out. There was also enthusiasm for the concept as a commercial product and suggestions that I should put them into production. In December 2017 I was also asked to make five sets of cards available for sale in the *Made in Wolves* initiative at the City of Wolverhampton Art Gallery[107].

From my experiments I found that the cards did 'wake me up'. They push one to engage with everyday moments that are often missed. They also push the user to think about their own place in the moment and to question what they are doing and why. As a tool for facilitating awareness, they have achieved the aim that I set at the start of this enquiry.

[107] As I explained in the Critical Framework, I did not want to exhibit this work. However, I was happy for the works to be for sale.

SECTION 3:

The two works in this section represent a move away from the more language-based works discussed previously. The *Gentlemen's Travel Dice* and the *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* demonstrate more of a novelty approach- creating works that engage the consumer through humour and their initial novelty value rather than the functional approach of previous works like the *Commuter Curve-ball Cards* and the *Raw Words.*

Chapter 10: *Gentlemen's Travel Dice*

Aims:

As I set out in the introduction to this thesis, the 1971 novel, *The Dice Man* by Luke Rhinehart was one of the starting points for this project.

In this chapter I will explain my research into the die as a creative primer and explore Rhinehart's hypothesis that dice can help in the decision-making process, and in the discovery of different facets of the personality. The chapter will also define how my research and experimental practice culminated in my aleatorickal work; *Gentlemen's Travel Dice;* a commodification of Rhinehart's 'dice living' ideas (See Rhinehart, 1971, Reprinted 1999).

New Perspectives and Insights:

The *Gentlemen's Travel Dice* (fig 50) breaks new ground as it combines and commodifies both the ubiquitous plastic die with Rhinehart's dice philosophy and reimagines them as a new consumer product. As such, the *Gentlemen's Travel Dice* is a lifestyle product, but also a new aleatorickal work; one which pushes the user to confront issues of identity, decision making and control. The work simplifies and adds value to the concept that Rhinehart called 'dice living.'

Figure 50: Colton, D., 2017. Gentlemen's Travel Dice Image 1. [photograph] (private collection).

Enquiry

Dice are cheap[108] and commonplace (fig 51). But I also suggest that dice are tools of profound creative power. As objects, their origins are ancient. They can be used to change fortunes, make life-changing decisions and make discoveries. The die is also an aleatorickal work in its own right; one that places the user into a direct relationship with chance.

Figure 51*:* 6- sided spot dice- mixed colours (Amazon, 2018: online).

[108] This set of 25 assorted dice are available from *Amazon* for £3.74 including delivery (20th March 2018).

The Dice Man was first published in the UK in 1971[109]. This was a novel about breaking the limitations of the self through the utilisation of chance. The hypothesis was that making decisions by random throws of a die, or allowing the die to decide behaviour, could free the dice user from ego and self- sanctioned boundaries or 'reality tunnels'. The protagonist, Luke Rhinehart (1971) concluded that it was being attached to the self and our habits that makes people miserable, and that it was possible to cut or modify these attachments using the dice. The novel explores a life of making decisions through the chance roll of the die. Rhinehart, a bored psychiatrist begins to use dice to free himself from his own personality and habits. It is a 'thought experiment' on what living like this would be like- where it might lead.

Rhinehart (a pseudonym adopted by University professor George Cockcroft) was in his mid-thirties at the time he wrote *The Dice Man*. On a personal level he was no stranger to using dice to make decisions, and in his youth, he frequently used them to escape what he felt was his inhibited personality; 'I was a shy, uptight sort of guy in my teens and early twenties, and tremendously driven to succeed, get A grades and so on, and I did not like either of those characteristics one bit...' (Cockcroft in Adams, 2000: Online). Cockcroft was teaching a class on Nietzsche[110] and Sartre[111] when he suggested to his students that using dice to escape from causality and habit could be the ultimate freedom. His students were either fascinated or appalled by the idea, and at that point he said that he knew he was onto something interesting (Cockcroft in Adams, 2000: Online).

Rhinehart's 'dice living' philosophy relies on the traditional die, and the allocating of different choices to the numbers on it. In doing this, the user creates their own parameters, in that, they decide what will happen when a particular number is thrown. I wanted to develop Rhinehart's original idea into something new. A work that would encapsulate his ideas and also something that could be commodified. I picked two different methods of using the dice from the novel and created a new die that would explore each of them (fig

[109] Initially, the book did not sell well. However, it has now been constantly in print for over 30 years, selling more than two million copies worldwide (see Harper Collins, 2016). The Telegraph newspaper included the book in their 50 best cult books (see The Telegraph, 2016) and in 1999, *Loaded* magazine called *The Dice Man* 'the novel of the century' (see Harper Collins, 2016).

[110] Freedom to Nietzsche is a constant self- overcoming. An exercise in 'will to power' (see Gemes and May (2009).

[111] Sartre proposed that because we have consciousness, we are free. (see Sartre, 1943, reprinted 1977).

52). The concept was that the dice could be used separately, or in conjunction with one another to make a choice in any given situation.

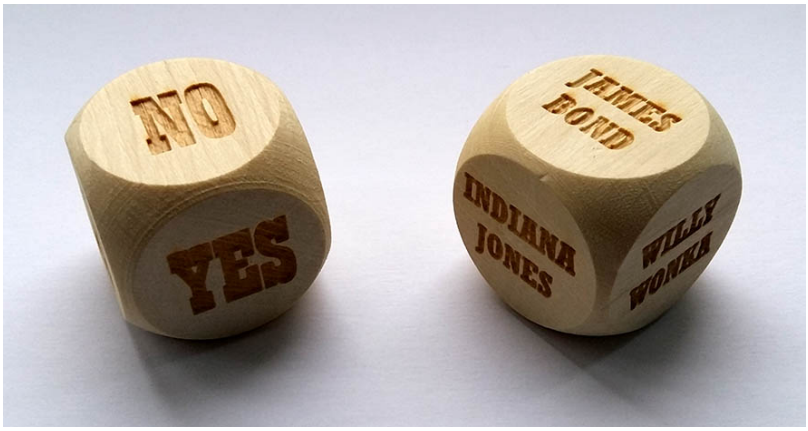


Figure 52: Colton, D., 2017. Gentlemen's Travel Dice Image 2. [photograph] (private collection).

Die One:

According to Rhinehart (2012), there is no *true* self. Instead of believing that each of us are only one 'real' personality, he suggests that an individual has many actors inside of them, and that the dice can become the random director of these various personalities. He proposes that people should learn to play with their various 'selves':

> Society is a vast conspiracy to make us a single self, and to escape this self we must somehow become detached from all those habits and values and attitudes that society has encrusted us in… One of the ways to do this is to force ourselves to be other than we would normally be. This is one of the functions that the dice can perform. They make us take risks, step out of our normal roles, and in this way, we begin to break the shell of our self […] We have no true self- we have many actors inside of us, and these are the ones that must be permitted to play. (*Diceworld*: Part 1: 2012, Online: 0 min. 0)

What Rhinehart is suggesting here is that the dice can be used to choose different characters or personality traits that can then be lived out as an experiment. In chapter 15 of *the Dice Man*, Rhinehart lets the dice decide that he should be Jesus Christ for a day (1971, reprinted 1999: 122). Later in the book he gave the die 'six optional persons' one of whom he'd try to be for the rest of the day as a 'pattern breaking event' (1971, reprinted 1999:

267).

Although people often present different facets of their personalities in different situations; at work, or with friends and family, for example, what Rhinehart is suggesting is a more conscious or mindful process. When someone decides to adopt a different persona in the way that Rhinehart advocates, they are consciously forcing a change. As he says, we are 'stepping out of our normal role' and 'allowing minority impulses to come to the fore; those which are blocked by the main personality…' (*Diceworld*: Part 1, 2012, Online: 0 min 34). The idea behind my work is that consciously adopting a different personality from the one normally projected (even superficially) can facilitate an examination of personal behaviour patterns, and an investigation of the egotistical 'I' that often drives behaviour and thought. I am not advocating a new *representation* of the self[112]. This can be seen in contemporary culture on *Facebook* or *Instagram*, for example, where an individual presents often idealised images and versions of themselves. What I am suggesting is consciously adopting a different personality, and in doing so, acting, reacting, and making decisions according to how one would imagine that character would.

The writer, Austin Kleon[113] proposes that an individual not only has a 'familiar genealogy' but also a 'genealogy of ideas' (2012, Online: 7 min 20); that each person is made up of the culture they absorb; and he suggests that each person is '… a mash-up of what you let into your life (2012, Online: 7 min 50). As I have already argued, any creative act is a combination of elements that already exist. If one uses dice to explore a different personality trait, that personality is still 'us' - we are channelling ourselves through our perception of how that new personality would act. As Nietzsche said; 'In the end one experiences only oneself.' (1883, reprinted 1999 :195). What one is doing is creating a cut-up of their own personality (As discussed in chapters 6 and 7).

[112] There are issues of using social media to present romanticised versions of oneself, or on-line activities like *Catfishing* (Internet predators who fabricate online identities for deceptive purposes). What I am proposing is not about fabrication or deception, but the breaking down of barriers or expectations for therapeutic purposes.

[113] Kleon is author of *Newspaper Blackout* (2010) and a contemporary advocate of the cut-up.

Tart argues that members of a society are hypnotised by the culture to reflect that culture's consensus of beliefs and values. (1986: 88). This 'cultural relativity' proposes that it is far better if an individual's 'everyday mind' (the habitual and automatic way one thinks and feels) is in tune with the cultural consensus. Tart calls this the 'consensus trance' (Tart, 1986:86). Gablik (1992) also proposes that to grow up in a society means that one is culturally hypnotised to see reality as that society sees it, and that this 'cultural trance' programmes much of our thoughts and behaviour (also see Burroughs (1976).

As I suggested in chapter 4, we are also shaped by consumer culture. Guattari (1984)[114] posited that late capitalism defines who we think we are and how we present ourselves to the world and Marlon Xavier points out, 'As a socioeconomic system, consumerism seeks to produce and shape its subjects according to its logic and needs. The result is that, in our global culture, being a consumer is what ultimately defines the subject' (Xavier, 2015: 208). As I argued in chapter 4, advertising and social media also shape thinking and values. The result is the development of a constructed self or ego; a personal brand built from buying and lifestyle choices. These constructed habits and boundaries can make it difficult to see beyond a narrow view of the self and the possibilities open to it. As Berger says; 'Capitalism survives by forcing the majority, whom it exploits, to define their own interests as narrowly as possible' (Berger, 1972: 154). This is what Rhinehart means when he talks of society's conspiracy to make us a single self (see Chapter 2).

By purposefully adopting different personas, one can try out different facets of the self and explore their potential. As I pointed out in Chapter 2, Gurdjieff believed that there is no single 'I'. It is an illusion to consider oneself as a 'permanent and unchangeable I' (Gurdjieff in Tart, 1986: 117). I agree with Rhinehart when he says that humans '… cage our-selves in patterns to avoid facing new problems and possible failure' (1971, reprinted 1999: 152). Die One can allow anyone to step out of these constructed patterns and explore. It can help the user to understand that ultimately a personality is a collection of patterns of thought and behaviour and that these can be changed.

[114] Felix Guattari - French Philosopher, Psychotherapist and Activist (1930 – 1992).

Die One in the *Gentleman's Travel Dice* presents six cultural male archetypes[115] as portrayed in Hollywood films between 1962 and 1999[116] . These are James Bond (1962), Willy Wonka (1971), Doctor Frank-N-Furter (1975), Indiana Jones (1981), Gandhi (1984) and Tyler Durden (1999). I thought that these characters would be known by the demographic whom the product was aimed at, and that each one had specific character traits that they could explore; for example, Indiana Jones – brave, adventurous and intelligent and Doctor Frank-N-Furter, charming, hedonistic and transsexual. The idea is to roll the die and then adopt the chosen persona for a specific period of time. All actions, choices and decisions should be carried out as the dice thrower believes that the chosen character would behave. This can be done in a variety of ways, for example, in problem solving, the die could be used to adopt a specific viewpoint for examining the problem[117]. Different personalities could be adapted for inspiration in social or work situations, in a similar way to the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) wristbands worn by some Christians.

Die Two:

As I pointed out in Chapter 2, contemporary secular culture sees personal decisions as important; that they have consequences, that making a *right* decision is crucial. Because of this, one can become afraid of making the wrong decision. I have discussed, Rhinehart's suggestion that using dice to open one up to change can be liberating and help the user to escape from fear, habit and narrow thinking. Doing this can also give insights into how and why decisions are made. The second die in the work, *Die Two*, reduces decisions to a simple binary choice: yes or no[118]. The aim is that the user should make all binary decisions by letting the dice decide from these two options.

I did experiment with the Yes/No dice. I tried making everyday decisions, but this highlighted some of the limits of binary decision making; I discovered that if one continues

[115] These are not to be confused with Jung's archetypes. Jung believed that there are a range of archetypes that reflect our collective unconscious such as the 'shadow', the 'child', the 'trickster' and the 'mother' (See Jung, 1969, reprinted 1990). I do not suggest that adopting different personalities necessarily connects us with a collective unconscious.

[116] Selected to appeal to the product's target demographic.

[117] De Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* (1985) uses a similar principle for generating effective decision making in business meetings.

[118] I discovered Yes/No dice when staying in a hotel in Budapest in June 2014 (fig 60). These two large wooden dice were displayed as ornaments in the bar.

to make decisions like this, things can descend quickly into confusion and chaos. This was also backed up by the *Diceworld* documentary, where one interviewee likened his experience with the dice to bungy-jumping. He suggested that at first it was exhilarating, but that using the dice will eventually sabotage your life. 'It's fun…', he says, but '… it's like a bungy-jump or a mad fairground ride (…) you do eventually want to get off the ride. You don't want to spend your life bungy-jumping' (*Diceworld*: Part Two, Online: 7 min 26). Through my own experiments I could identify with this and it confirmed that the real function of dice like these should be as a tool for unblocking or for making changes, and not for continued use.

Another discovery was that I often didn't want a yes or no, but real alternatives. For example, if I ask the die if I should take my dog for a walk and it said no, I would most likely have to ask it the same question again later. If, instead, I give myself alternatives such as take the dog or go shopping or write up this chapter, what I am doing is pushing myself into new situations that I can learn from.

I did discover that the Yes/No die could be used effectively on a recent dog walk. At each junction I asked the die if I should turn off onto a new road. The result was a range of new walks, some taking me to places I hadn't previously visited. Overall, though, my experiences with the dice have qualified my earlier findings, that these dice are a tool for those who need them, and in that situation, they can be used as a tool for change or therapy.

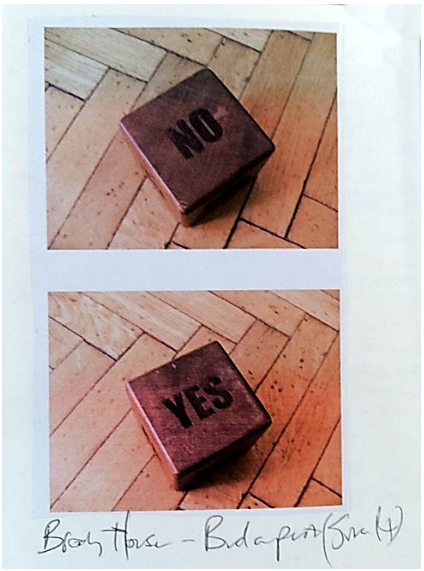


Figure 53: Colton, D., 2014. Large Wooden Dice. Brody House Hotel, Budapest. [photograph] (private collection).

The Product:

Most of the works I have created during this PhD project have been modelled on cheap ephemera and throw-away products such as scratch-cards, newspaper cut-ups and milk bottles. As I have already pointed out, the traditional die, in most of its forms is cheap and ubiquitous. I wanted to change this. I wanted to add value by creating something that would, instead have quality and longevity. For this item I wanted to add value to the cheap plastic die and create something that would turn it into a life-style product. At the time of creating this work (2016-18) there had been a growing trend for male lifestyle and grooming products[119] and I had begun to examine some of the ideas and designs that had grown out of this trend. At the time of writing this, there are many independent shops catering for this new market (fig 54), selling products such as beard oil and facial hair care kits, bicycle tyre repair kits, sunglasses and alternative T-shirts made of sustainable materials.

[119] Particularly as part of the Hipster movement- and alternative subculture interested in alternative lifestyles including vintage clothing and artefacts.

Figure 54: Colton, D., 2017. Shop Window, Oxford. [photograph] (private collection).

Many of the products are packaged in wooden boxes or tins. This culture and style was the inspiration for the design and production of the *Gentleman's Travel Dice.*

Figure 55: Colton, D., 2017. Gentlemen's Travel Dice Image 3. [photograph] (private collection).

The *Gentleman's Travel Dice* presents two maple wood dice contained in a draw-string linen bag inside a chrome tin (fig 55). Initially, I experimented with making the dice out of plastic on a 3D printer, however, the results were crude and didn't have the quality I was looking for. The final dice were blank wooden dice that I sourced from the internet. I had these laser-cut with the text and then polished them. The tins were bought from *ebay,* and the labels were created in *Adobe illustrator*, printed on clear film and attached to the tin lids.

I envisage that sets of Travel Dice would become worn with age; that the tin would become dented and the dice scuffed with use. Eventually, sets would turn up in antique shops or in flea markets. I imagine that they could last for decades and become future antiques like snuff boxes or fob watches…

The aim of the *Gentlemen's Travel Dice* is to commodify these two aspects of Rhinehart's 'dice living' and make them available as an 'everyday' novelty lifestyle product that can be used as an aid to self-awareness or for tackling a variety of dilemmas or decision-making problems.

I do not envisage that these dice should be used constantly; or that they should be consulted in an unthinking or blind manner. They should be used as a tool for unblocking habitual or narrow thinking. For example, if one were to realise that making decisions was problematic, or if one realised that their choices had become too habitual. As Rhinehart suggests, 'We use chance to escape the confinement of repetitious order, but overdone, we descend into an equally though totally different destructive mode: chaos' (Cockcroft, 2016: see Appendix B). I suggest that they could be used in the same way that a gentleman might take a pinch of snuff in the Victorian era; but as a mental and emotional clearing or unblocking process.

Future developments of this concept would include a women's version; *Ladies Travel Dice.* I would also bring out different editions (like the *Oblique Strategies*) with different personalities, different dice and Special Edition sets.

Chapter 11: The *Zen Mop* and the *Zen Tea-Towel*

I have always enjoyed washing dishes. I like creating order out of the chaos. On an ordinary day, I'll wash up and then stack the dishes to drain; but if we have friends over for a meal, I like to dry all the dishes and utensils and put them away. I find the process really satisfying. It is contemplative, and it centres me. The best part of hosting a dinner is the washing up afterwards. People who I tell this to think it is strange. The Zen Mop and Zen Tea-Towel are an attempt to explain...

Aims:

As I pointed out in chapter 4, a contemporary secular version of Zen is now used to give a range of products and services a certain legitimacy. By linking a product to the term 'Zen,' marketeers embody the product with an expectation of relaxation, peace and mindfulness. The term Zen has been appropriated from its eastern origins and is now used to describe contemporary moods, attitudes and behaviour.

This project attempts to subvert these products that are sold as 'Zen' and in doing so, creates two aleatorickal works that connect us with the principles and philosophy of Zen practice. The *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* are commonplace products that appropriate the appropriators of Zen philosophy, but by engaging with them, the purchaser will be buying instruction in Zen practice.

The aim is to create an antithesis to the current range of Zen inspired products. Rather than using Zen spiritual practice to market them, my work will use the products to introduce the consumer to the key principles of Zen.

New Perspectives and Insights:

On one level, these works comment on the contemporary commercialisation of Zen and other eastern spiritual practices. As I explained in Chapter 4, I am not making a moral judgement on the commodification of spiritual practice. These works subvert the current agenda for appropriating Zen to sell commercial products. In doing so, they reference Jankowski's 1992/97 work *The Hunt*, which also uses the contemporary supermarket space

in which to situate the work. However, the main focus, and where the work breaks new ground, is in the reversal of this commercial process; instead of appropriating Zen to enhance an everyday household product, these common household products are used to promote Zen philosophy and practice. These works hide in the supermarket space, masquerading as commonplace household items, but their purpose is to surprise the consumer into engaging with the key principles of Zen. This is a new approach, connecting the contemporary consumer with traditional spiritual practice.

The appropriation and commodification of Zen:

In the first part of this thesis I discussed the appropriation of eastern spiritual practice, and how through the processes of secularisation and commodification, it has lost much of its authenticity. I also argued that this loss of authenticity is not important, and pointed out that in a contemporary context, like truth, authenticity is also in the eye of the beholder. It is also bounded by context and culture. I also outlined Kruger's point that very little in our contemporary secular culture is authentic (see Chapter 4). This is an important point in relation to this project; if I am going to subvert the commercialisation of Zen, then this subversion does not have to be driven by 'authentic' Zen as practiced at its traditional source. What has been created is a hybrid spirituality where the east is filtered through a contemporary cultural lens. As Lochmann suggests:

> … westerners' discussion of Buddhism was much less about Buddhism proper and much more about their interaction with and understanding of Buddhism. It is about making that new belief system from a different culture conform to an already established cultural system… (Lochmann, 2011: 9)

As I argued in chapter 4 of this thesis, from the late 20th to the present day, contemporary secular culture has, in effect, become a consumer of eastern spirituality. Carrette and King (2005) point out that contemporary society tends to interpret eastern practices as personal and individual. The culture translates eastern spiritual ideas and practices and appropriates these into modern secular consumer lives. Doran[120] explains how eastern influenced mindfulness practice has become big business, worth over one billion dollars in the USA,

[120] Peter Doran is a lecturer in Law at Queen's University Belfast.

and linked to an expanding product market which includes books, on-line courses and over 1300 apps (2018: Online). My own recent research into Zen Buddhist consumer culture has unearthed a sizable range of products, services and websites to help the consumer create a 'Zen' atmosphere in their lives, including; *Everything You Need to Create an Ultra Chill Zen Space* (See http:// www.instyle.com/lifestyle/ shop-home-decor-calm-zen-products) where the writer, Lindsay Dolak explains that:

> …It's easier than it sounds to incorporate zen principles into our interior design and decoration. We've rounded up a few products you can easily add to your abode to create a space you'll really want to namastay in. (Amazon, 2017: Online)

I also discovered *The Ritual of Dao Dish Wash - Bringing peace and tranquillity into your life.* (See https://uk.rituals.com /en-gb/washing-up-liquid/the-ritual-of-dao-dish-wash-4470.html#start=22) and on *Amazon*, the *Zen garden tray set with Buddha and gong,* (fig 56) which includes; 1 Buddha, 1 candle holder, 1 artificial plant, 1 rake, 2 pebbles and white sand (Tea Lights not included) (£19.99). The seller explains that this set 'is perfect for adding a touch of zen to your home.' (Amazon, 2017: Online). And a reviewer of the product posts:

> For the price, I was expecting this to be really tacky and cheap but thought I would give it a go having just come back from Japan and embracing the whole culture and beliefs. But it's surprisingly lovely. Personally, I think this doesn't look like some cheap tacky product, but something to light when listening to a zen garden cd (which I also bought off Amazon!!!) and being all, well, zen like!! Hope you love it as much as I do. (Amazon,2017: Online)

Figure 56: The Zen garden tray set with Buddha and gong. (amazon.co.uk, no date: online).

Although I do not set out to critique the westernisation of eastern spiritual practice, as artworks, the *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* are still an effective critique on the commodification of Zen practice and the commercial appropriation of these practices. These products comment on the often-absurd nature of this appropriation as seen in the *Zen garden tray set* example. Here I can draw a parallel between these current works and Jankowski's 1992 - 1997 artwork; *The Hunt*, where the artist roams a supermarket shooting his prey (the products on the shelves) with a bow and arrow (See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxM_ZKYdvqQ).

The *Institute of Contemporary Art*, Boston describe the work as 'an amusing critique on the disaffected commercialization of securing sustenance…' (ICA Boston, no date: Online). Both Jankowski's and my own project use humour in a way that mirrors earlier Dadaist examples). However, even though these works are ironic and use humour they are not primarily an attempt to make a critique on cultural appropriation. The main aim is to create useful products that introduce the buyer to Zen.

Zen enlightenment:

According to Matthews and Hattam (2004)[121] variants of Zen are practiced in several different counties in the east, and that it could be argued that contemporary Zen draws from all of these. They suggest that whereas Buddhist enlightenment is pursued through meditation, a characteristic of Zen is the abandonment of conceptualisation and the preparation for a sudden enlightenment. D T Suzuki explains that Zen practice can be understood as a 'straightforward, concrete assault upon the contradictory dualistic subject-object structure of the ego in ego-consciousness' (see Fromm et al, 2000: 154).

My investigations have discovered that much of Zen philosophy is about revealing both this connectedness of all things and the absurdity of the abstract isolated moment (see Chapter 3). In Zen, the self that achieves freedom from itself, and realises the non- existence of a

[121] See *Did Buddha laugh? Zen, humour and pedagogy.*

separate self, achieves enlightenment. Zen has no holy books or scriptures. In Zen, meditation alone will not lead to enlightenment. Zen is a discipline that trains the mind so that it becomes ready for enlightenment. According to [122] D T Suzuki (1949), Zen instruction can only point the way to enlightenment, and it is only the self that can achieve it. When logic has been abandoned and the mind has become matured, then *satori* is all around. It is often the most insignificant events that will open the mind to enlightenment; a spoken remark, a blooming flower or a trivial incident. D T Suzuki gives the example of one young monk who was enlightened by a pebble:

> One day he was weeding and sweeping the ground when a pebble which he had swept away struck a bamboo; the unexpected sound produced by the percussion elevated his mind to a state of *satori*. His joy was boundless. (Suzuki, D T, 1949, reprinted 1991: 91)

Suzuki explains that; '… *satori* strikes at the primary root of existence, its attainment generally marks a turning point in one's life (1949, reprinted 1991: 91). Satori or enlightenment is the aim of Zen. Without which there is no Zen.

This project, therefore, developed from these two aspects; the appropriation and commodification of Zen in the marketing of products; and my research into Zen, it's practice and the often-prosaic actions that lead to enlightenment.

The *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel:*

The concept for this project began as I made the connection between Suzuki's example of a pebble triggering enlightenment and the mundane activity of washing dishes (fig 57).

[122] D T Suzuki taught at Columbia University from 1952 to 1957. John Cage was one of his students, and he was credited with being instrumental in bringing the study of Zen to the USA. Shunryu Suzuki (no relation) founded the *San Francisco Zen Center* in 1959.

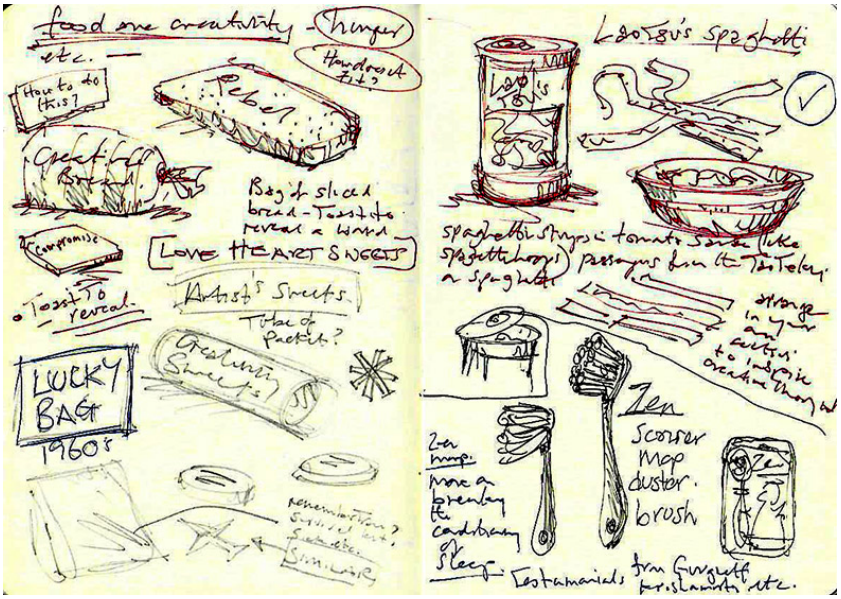


Figure 57: Colton, D., 2015. Sketches from notebook. [photograph] (private collection).

As I explained at the start of this chapter, I find cleaning dishes a centring activity and I felt that this would lend itself to a product like a mop, that could combine this contemplative potential with the mundane quality I was looking for in the product. I wanted this disparity, but also an element of humour. The *Zen Mop* combined these elements. In this case, I was creating a work that was in direct contrast to the others that I had made, and in particularly, the *Gentleman's Travel Dice*. As I pointed out in the last chapter, the die is also an aleatorickal work in its own right; one that places the user into a direct relationship with chance. In the case of the *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* the works do not have an inherent connection with chance; it is the *chance discovery* of the work, hiding in plain sight amongst the mundane household items that is the chance element here.

D T Suzuki writes that humour is used in Zen[123] to break down logic and reliance on the intellect; 'if anything (Zen) is the antipode to logic, by which I mean the dualistic mode of thinking' (1949, reprinted 1991: 38). Matthews and Hattam put forward the point that in Zen, the tradition of 'laughing at oneself' is a key pedagogical practice' (2004: 12).

[123]A Zen student went to a temple and asked how long it would take him to gain enlightenment if he joined the temple.
'Ten years' said the Zen master.
'Well, how about if I really work hard and double my effort?'
'Twenty years.'
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201303/top-10-zen-jokes

And that Zen uses… 'a theory of knowledge and humour which regarded being taken by surprise as able to reassemble order and see with new the light of a realization which releases us from former ignorance' (2004: 13). Humour was also a major factor in the creation of these two works.

I did display the *Zen Mop* at both the *Words at Play* exhibition at Manchester Metropolitan University (Cheshire) in 2016 and *the 9th MMU Postgraduate Research Conference* at Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester) in 2017. In both cases the humorous nature of the work was acknowledged, however, as I earlier explained, the work needs to be situated in a retail environment and then purchased and used if it is to have the desired effect. The aim is for the consumer to make a chance discovery of the *Zen Mop* or *Zen Tea-Towel*, situated amongst the other mundane household products in the supermarket (see fig 58). I wanted this discovery to make them laugh, to jolt or surprise them; the chance moment of a connection with the incongruous and the unexpected[124] - like the *ah-ha* moment of creative discovery. [125]Then the subsequent purchase of one of these products could be the start of a new direction, a new interest, or even a new state of engaging with the self and the world as they apply the instructions to the practice of cleaning dishes.

[124] As discussed in chapter 3, both Dada and Surrealism used random connections in this way.

[125] In May 2018 I discovered a display of 'Mystery Books' in Blackwell's Bookshop in Oxford. Each book was wrapped in brown paper. This idea is similar – the book could be a disappointment, or the discovery of a new favourite author or genre of writing. The chance discovery of a new direction.

Figure 58: Colton, D., 2018 Zen Mop in Supermarket. [photograph] (private collection).

Unlike the other projects that I have carried out, where chance is activated by the use of the various artefacts, the aleatorickal aspect of these two products lies at the point of discovery, and only partly in their use. They hide in plain sight, waiting to be discovered. The use of the products could have several different outcomes, but it is the chance discovery that sets them in motion.

I accept that it is unlikely that the consumer will find *satori* or enlightenment whilst using the product. In Zen, the mind must be attuned first through practice. However, the aim is for the consumer to engage with the practice, and this is done by first reading the instructions on the pack. If these are followed, then it is possible that this could result in a positive experience; and even one that may prompt further study or engagement with Zen philosophy and practice.

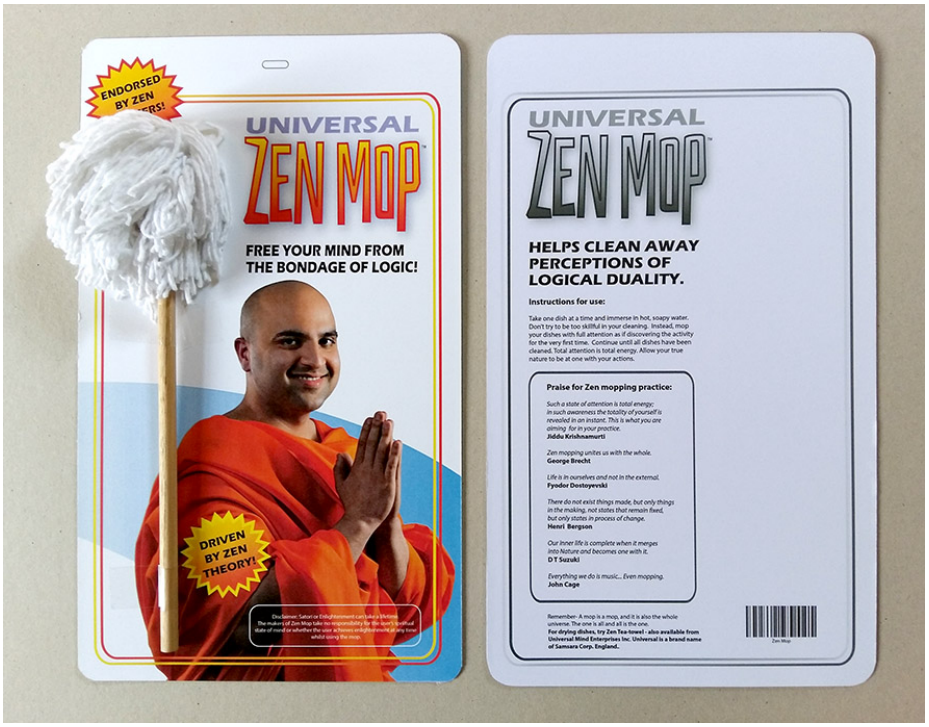


Figure 59: Colton, D., 2016 Zen Mop package design. [photograph] (private collection).

Brecht's *Event Scores* (discussed in Chapter 5) were an attempt to enable an enlightening or transcendent experience by focusing on a selected fragment of abstract experience. The *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* (fig 59 and 60) can do the same. Even though these are standard household products; a wooden handled mop and a cotton Tea-towel, it is the packaging and branding which gives the context, in the same way as a product like the *Zen garden tray set* can be given a Zen context by the semiotic associations created by the branding. By engaging with the product and in particularly, the packaging, the consumer is introduced to the key principles of Zen practice.

The design of the packaging has been based on contemporary household products that I have researched. I had also designed similar packaging whilst working as a graphic designer in the late 1970s, and I wanted to include some of the design aspects from that time; such as the elaborate lettering, the stars, the cut-out photographic figures and the borders with rounded corners.

Figure 60: Colton, D., 2017 Zen Tea-Towel package design. [photograph] (private collection).

Every aspect of the design was intended to add to the visuals and semiotics of a household product while also to enforcing the semantic theme of Zen practice. The copy that I have written was interrogated to make sure that it reinforced the concept; for example, the name *Universal* related to the universal nature of Zen, and all of the other textual information was adapted from Zen ideas, particularly those of D T Suzuki (fig 61 and 62).

The copyright permissions of the images of the Buddhist monks were obtained from the image libraries that I sourced them from. I spent a lot of time searching for the right poses and expressions; I wanted to create a faintly humorous atmosphere, one that would disarm, but also make the product fit in with the others in the retail space.

I also used a device that is often seen on cleaning products; the endorsement. On the back of the *Zen Mop* pack there is a box headed; *Praise for Zen mopping practice* which contains supposed feedback on the product (fig 61). The feedback was created by taking quotes out of context and applying them to the product, and by attributing the quotes to parodies of the names of the philosophers and artists that I had read whilst researching the project.

In one case, I appropriated a comment by John Cage and added to it so that it read; *'Everything we do is music… Even mopping.'* And attributed it to *Dr J Cage of Edinburgh.* I felt that using these quotes in this way added a sense of the absurd to a product like a mop but made sense when seen in the context of enlightenment practice. In the case of the *Zen Tea-Towel*, I decided to create fake reviews- these took the idea to a different level, making it much more humorous, but possibly reducing the credibility of the product.

The *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* remain my favourite of all the works that I have created for this PhD project. In many ways this work is not as strong a concept as others like *Raw Words* or the *Consumer Curve-ball Cards*, and I do not believe that it has the same power to affect as other works that I have created. Even so, I am pleased with the way that the work crosses the boundaries between an aleatorickal work; in that it can change thought and behaviour through its chance discovery and subsequent use, but also how it subverts the contemporary commodification of eastern spiritual beliefs and practice too. As a conventional artwork, the *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* stand alongside the *Suicide Box* as my strongest works.

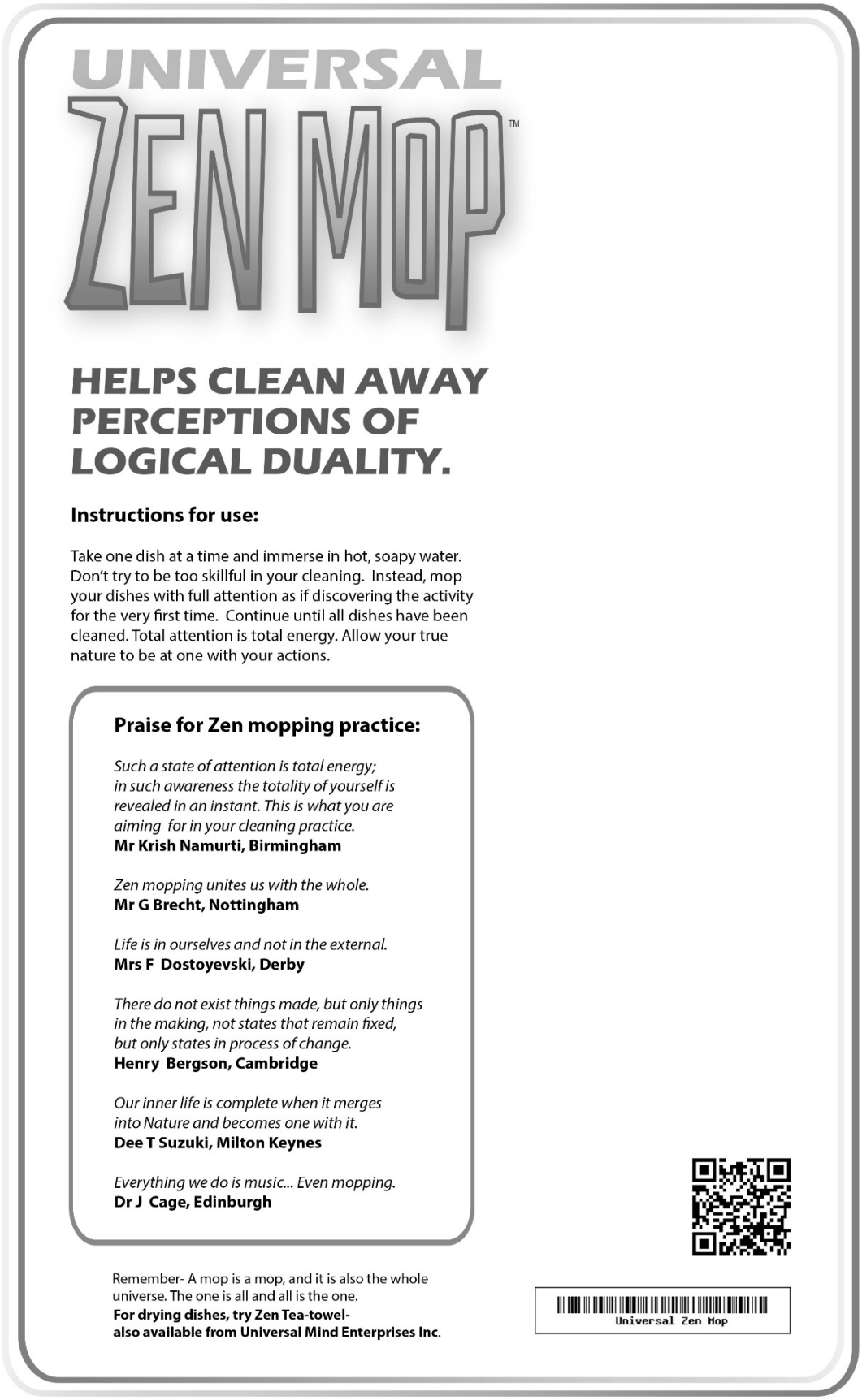


Figure 61: Colton, D., 2016 Zen Mop reverse of packaging. [photograph] (private collection).

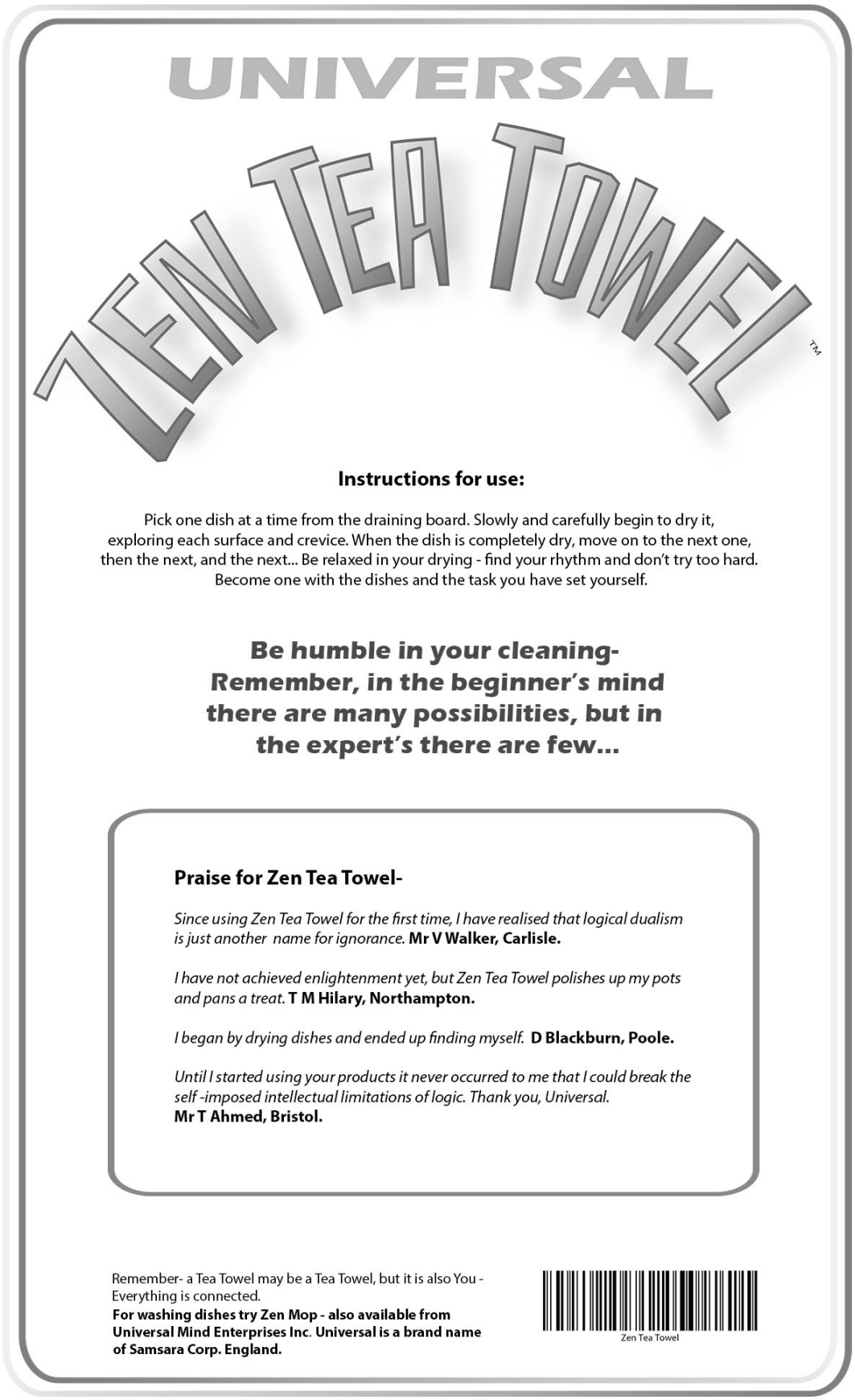


Figure 62: Colton, D., 2017 Zen Tea-Towel reverse of packaging. [photograph] (private collection).

Project Summary and Conclusions:

This conclusion discusses the new perspectives and insights discovered through this PhD project. It also explains what has been learned from my practice-based research and sets out future goals emanating from the work.

When I published *Murdertrail* magazine back in 1991 (discussed in Chapter 4) I was intrigued to discover that it was one of three new magazines based on similar subject matter that were all published around the same time. On many occasions during my career I had become aware of this clustering of ideas or themes, particularly in relation to publishing. This had led to an awareness of the theories of synchronicity and seriality as proposed by Jung, Von Franz and Kammerer (see Chapter 3).

Likewise, since beginning this project in April 2014, I have observed a growing interest in the Buddhist concept of mindfulness. This concept of being 'in the moment' or 'awake' (which I discussed in Chapter 9) has recently become mainstream in modern secular culture. It is exciting to see that my ideas and works mirror this current cultural zeitgeist, and present timely and alternative methods for accessing these ideas, and I would suggest that engaging with my products could become an addition or alternative to yoga, meditation or mindfulness practice too.

Primary Objective: To explore aleatory art processes and practices, with the aim of discovering how they could be adopted for use in a different context, outside of art practice. I wanted to find out whether, or how, aleatory processes could be used to examine and make changes to personal lives.

A key aspect of this project was to experiment with aleatory processes and, through praxis, re-invent them as new works. Looking back at the project, although the works created are inspired by research, it is the artefacts themselves that create the new perspectives on these original modernist practices. I agree with Skains, when she suggests that; '… the

creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge […] Claims of originality are demonstrated through the creative artefacts' (2018: Online).

The arguments presented in this thesis, and in particularly, the original works that I have made, advance the aleatory ideas and processes of the previous artists that they reference. The works that I have created re-position the ideas of the artists that I have researched, and by placing them in a new context, the commercial retail market, they have been given new purpose and been made available to a new audience. They have, to quote Kosuth, been '… brought alive' (1969: 19) and re-imagined in a new temporal and critical context.

The works that have evolved from my praxis are an innovative attempt to commodify personal, controlled or mediated access to chance. They situate the user within the chance process, and in effect, makes them the subject of their own experimentation and practice. There are nine artefacts discussed in the seven chapters of Part Two, and three other works that are included in the appendix, making twelve in total.

Primary Objective: to critically explore how we can make aleatory art 'products' out of commercial media and processes. I want to investigate the commodification of aleatory practice and determine to what extent access to chance could be commodified.

This project also makes the case for the consumer market as an expedient method of sharing art and ideas. In 1991, Gablik stated that art was 'characterised by individuals creating 'masterpieces', an 'ego-centred desire for autonomy' (1991: 168) and she argued for a new art- one where the relationship between artist and audience would change to a more equal relationship (1991: 170). In our contemporary culture we still have a thriving art gallery system and an 'ego-centred desire for autonomy', but we also have new ways to share art; self-publishing, technology, social media and web platforms like *YouTube* all make it easy to communicate, distribute and perform. There is also an explosion of performers and traditional makers and artisans who through these channels, can make a living from their work, and even pass on their skills and ideas through tutorials and workshops. In many

instances, contemporary creative culture has achieved Gablik's call for artists to see beyond 'social passivity' and a 'denial of responsibility' and instead, transform themselves into a force for 'healing and contact' (1991: 169). My artefacts offer a significant new contribution to this more inclusive and sharing type of art. My works agree with Dewey's view that art should facilitate the development of an 'experience', and Bourriaud's argument that artists should be facilitators rather than makers, that art should be an exchange or 'encounter' between artist and viewer (See Introduction). However, I argue that my project takes this even further; by acknowledging the relationship between consumerism and art and choosing to engage with consumer culture in an overt and transparent way.

As I explained in Chapter 4, I am not intending to critique or condone consumerism, I acknowledge that it does mediate much of contemporary secular culture and that this can be viewed as unhealthy. However, as I have shown, the consumer market is an ideal method of exposure, distribution and feedback for my aleatory artefacts; my works hide in plain sight, waiting for a meaningful and useful exchange with the consumer. As Sanderson suggested in Chapter 4, '…people are now looking for experiences, services, and products that help them to become better versions of themselves' (*Directions Magazine*, 2018: 53). These works, then, boldly use the contemporary consumer culture, which is often seem disenchanting, as a device to communicate art whose aim is to re-enchant lives.

An unexpected result of this study has been the subversive nature of the work that has developed from it. A few of the works actively subvert a number of established paradigms. The *Raw Words* mock the exclusivity and elitism of writing poetry, suggesting that anyone can do it with the right tools. The *Instant Karma Scratch Card* and *Karma Kards* destabilise the current scratch-card and lottery format. And as I discussed in Chapter 11, the *Zen Mop* and *Zen Tea-Towel* subvert the current agenda for appropriating Zen to sell commercial products.

Many of the works are fun, playful and humorous. The call for us to laugh at ourselves, to not take ourselves and our realities too seriously, and to realise that there are many ways to

live a life. Others push us to question why we are alive, what we live for, and why we do what we do. However, all of them are subversive. They challenge the contemporary appetite for rules and structures, the need for personal control. They defy media-sanctioned morality and question lives lived through the lens of social media. They are confrontational.

Another important insight gained from this research was noticing that the term *aleatory* is used as a blanket term to describe what is a range of subtly differing processes and practices. Throughout this thesis I have argued that there are differences between work that has been made using chance in the creative process, and work that instead pushes the consumer or user of the work into chance encounters and situations. I have called this variant, *aleatorickal* and it became the driving force behind my own praxis. This was a useful insight and is a new contribution to how we as artists define aleatory practice.

In the future, I hope other academics and artists may pick up on these ideas of mine, both theoretical and practical, which I have developed from the aleatory experiments of others, and again, take them into another new context for a new audience. Everything is connected.

Secondary Objective: To re-introduce interdisciplinary aleatory systems and processes to a contemporary audience, both within and outside of artistic practice.

This project brings together research from across artistic disciplines and re-introduces aleatory processes and practices to a new contemporary audience, both within and outside of artistic practice. Currently, there are no studies of aleatory practices which do this.

Working on this project and creating these works has activated many changes in my personal outlook and philosophy. The process has led me to be more mindful, to see connections and abstract moments, and to understand how my actions are connected to other actions; that what I do, and what happens to me, are all part of the same web of connections. I have begun to understand that my consciousness is a construct of my

physiology- my 'I' does not exist, it is a creation of my physiology. I have also concluded that human existence is abstract and meaningless; it is us who create the meaning in our lives. Working on this PhD has made me more curious, more tolerant and less of a worrier - Enlightenment through research.

My creative ideas naturally flow in a commercial environment, and the commercial space is where my ideas often fit. These artefacts that I have made during this project are not a parody of the commercial, or a comment on the nature of art like the work of the Fluxus artists, but a genuine expression of my own creative processes - my art. My tools are not paint, sound or performance. My art is in the creating of and arranging of images and texts to communicate. My ideas find their true expression when using the ontological methods and semiology of advertising, publishing and visual communication. This project has become a celebration of my art, and I have found this liberating. As I explained in Chapter 4, I had wanted to explore the interaction between commercial production and imaginative art concepts further. I found an immediate synergy between the ideas that I was devising for this project and the commercial novelties of my childhood (see Chapter 4). My art draws together elements from different aspects and times of my life. This project is, in one sense, a critical memoir.

When I look back on this PhD project, it becomes clear to me that it brings together interests and themes from different times in my life. The works that I have created are not an attempt at nostalgia or retro design, but the result of the bringing together of long-term interests, themes and questions. Many aspects of my research have interested me for much of my life and with the potential to explore these again and give free expression to my ideas, I went back to my roots.

Through this project I have explored chance as art. On a personal level this project has enabled me to re-connect art with life and examine how chance art can change lives. The works presented in this thesis are fun, exciting and un-nerving, and that is what I believe inspiring and thought-provoking art should be.

This thesis is a manifesto for engaging with chance.
I am an artist whose work is chance.
As an artist I choose to remain anonymous, I do not want recognition.
I do not want to exhibit my work; I do not want to be part of the art world.
I do not want to sell my works as works of art.
My art hides in plain sight. It masquerades as novelties and as household products - the works lie buried, waiting for a connection with the consumer.
My art reconnects life with art.
My art connects the commercial with the original holistic function of art.
My art is self-help.
My art has value beyond the aesthetic.
My art is for everyone and anyone who has the inclination to participate.
My art is confrontational.
My art is subversive.
My art is a call for rebellion!

APPENDIX A:

Works that have not been included in the thesis but have been made available to the examiners.

1: The *Jesus Fish*

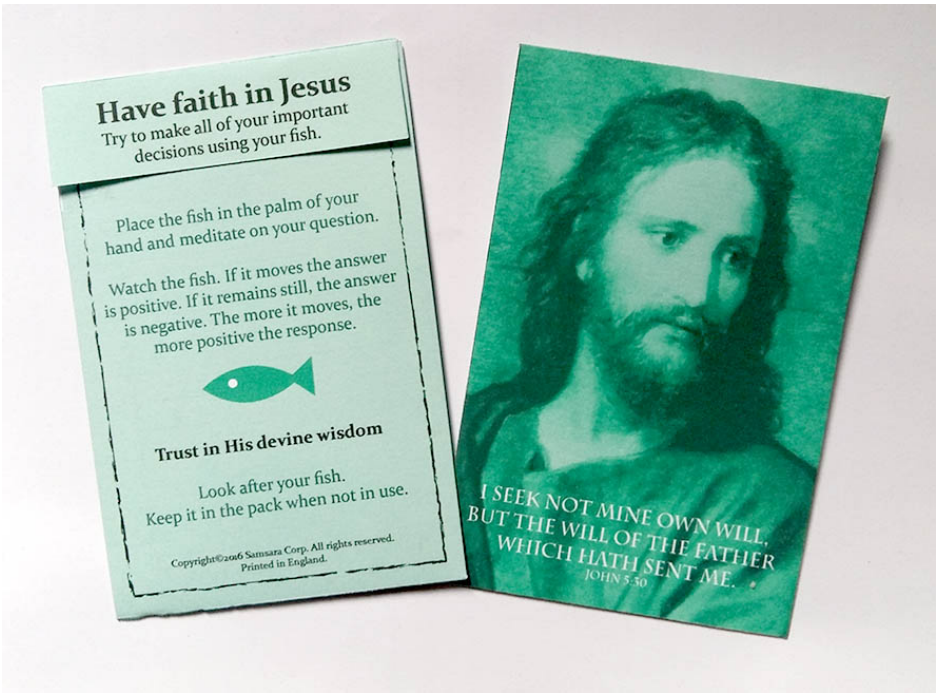
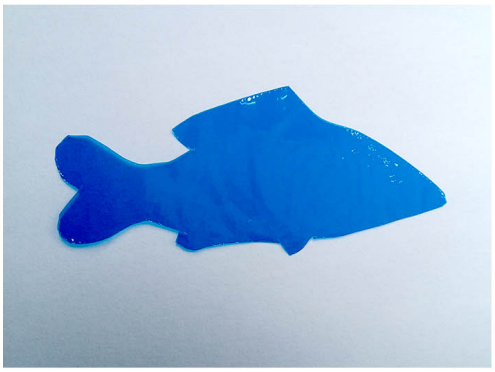


Figure 63: Colton, D., 2017. The Jesus Fish: Front and back of pack [photograph] (private collection).



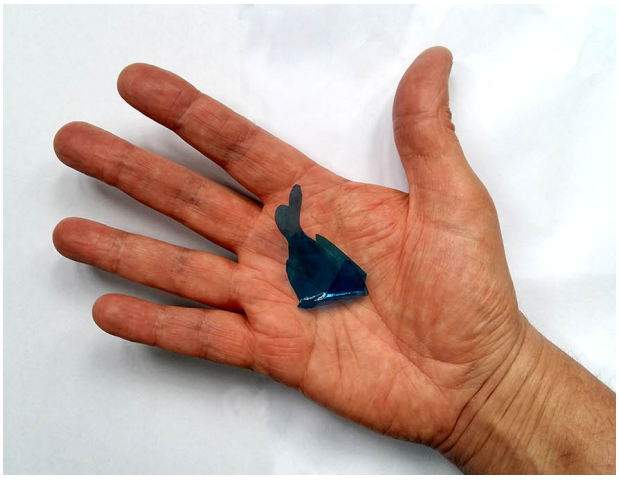


Figure 64: Colton, D., 2018. The cellophane fish [photograph] (private collection).
Figure 65: Colton, D., 2018. The cellophane fish in hand [photograph] (private collection).

2: *The Royal Lottery Scratchcard*

Figure 66: Colton, D., 2017. Lottery card - Front [photograph] (private collection).

Figure 67: Colton, D., 2017. Lottery card - Back [photograph] (private collection).

3: *Drink Me*

Figure 68: Colton, D., 2017. Three milk bottles - Front [photograph] (private collection).

Figure 69: Colton, D., 2017. Three milk bottles - Back [photograph] (private collection).

Appendix B:

Selected correspondence with George Cockcroft (Luke Rhinehart), author of *The Dice Man. The complete transcripts can be made available to the examiners if requested.*

Cockroft, G. (2015) *George's comments on David's articles.* Email to David Colton. 26th March.

Subject: Re: George's comments on David's articles

George;

There are two issues I'd love to hear your thoughts on. First is whether art benefits most from totally surrendering to chance or is most useful when an artist's conscious intention is interacting with chance. My own feeling is that totally surrendering to chance leads to complete chaos, a state just as bad as complete order.

David;

I totally agree. I have thought about this a lot. I realised that I don't really rate art that has been created totally by chance. It is *usually* cold and dull, I think. Personally, I believe that it needs some sort of creative spark to ignite it. The artist (dance, actor, writer, painter, etc…) is the magician. I'm far more interested in the systems that allow chance into the creative work, or into people's lives than actual artwork. Cage's 4:33 is a good example. This is a *chance* artwork, but really a *system* that allows the audience to sit in silence and then allows the sounds of life, the universe, or their minds, to enter the silence. Brilliant!
(Actually, do you remember those little cellophane fish that you placed in your hand and if it curled up it meant one thing, and if not, it meant something else?)

George;

We use chance to escape the confinement of repetitious order, but overdone, we descend into an equally though totally different destructive mode: chaos.

David;

Yes chaos, or dullness. Actually, I think that a really good point came up in the *Diceworld* film. The interviewer asked you if you thought using dice was a leap of faith. You said no, an

act of *will*. I think this is crucial. To use any chance system requires *will*… AND IMAGINATION. I noticed the section in DW where you asked people on the street to use dice. It seemed that many were very reluctant. I think this is actually a lack of imagination. I think you have to be ABLE TO FEEL or REALLY IMAGINE the possibilities. This is where the excitement comes in. If you can't really IMAGINE another reality to the one you currently have, then it is hard to activate the will.

Interestingly, this is why the Dice Man book works so well, I think. It is (if you'll pardon my presumptions) a thought experiment, in a way. Luke tells us what it was like to live the dice life and what happened. This is compelling. I'm not surprised that the book has become more and more popular as we move further into a society that consumerism commands to be 'individuals'.

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